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# BEFORE THE WAR

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# BEFORE THE WAR

Studies in Diplomacy

*By*

G. P. GOOCH, D.Litt., F.B.A.,

*Author of History of Europe 1878-1919,  
Recent Revelations of European Diplomacy, etc.*

Vol. II

The Coming of the Storm

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## PREFACE

THE purpose of this work was explained in the preface to the first volume, published in 1936, which dealt with Lansdowne, Delcassé, Bülow, Iswolsky and Aehrenthal. The chapters which compose it are neither biographies nor essays in psychological interpretation but, as the sub-title proclaims, studies in diplomacy. No attempt is made to prove or disprove a thesis. The sole object is to explain the formation of policies and the sequence of events. A certain amount of overlapping is inevitable, but on balance it is not to be deplored. Complicated international situations should be studied from different angles.

The opening of the archives of all the Great Powers of Europe except Italy has supplied the historian of the last years of peace with a wealth of material which no other period can rival or approach. Biographies, autobiographies and diaries cannot be neglected, and public declarations must be kept in view. But the only solid foundation for a book of this character is to be sought in the vast collections of Foreign Office documents which record from day to day, and sometimes from hour to hour, the impressions, the anxieties, and the decisions of the men at the helm. No excuse is needed for allowing them at many points to tell their story in their own words; for not every reader has access to the voluminous evidence or leisure to separate the kernel from the husk.

The responsibilities of 1914 will not be decided by this or any other book. That any single statesman or nation was the sole criminal is no longer seriously believed. Yet the distribution of blame still tends to vary in some degree with the nationality of the expert, however conscientiously he may strive to stand above the battle. We are still discussing the origins of the long struggle with France which began in 1792, of the conflicts of 1854, 1866 and 1870. It is part of the tragedy of the world war that every belligerent can make out a case entirely convincing to itself. For tragedy, in Hegel's words, is the conflict not of right with wrong but of right with right. The statesmen portrayed in these pages did not create the evil

system of groups and alliances which they were called upon to work, and none of them had the power to change it, even if the will was there. The ultimate cause of the explosion was the European anarchy, the absence of international machinery, the doctrine of the unfettered sovereign national state, the universal assumption that the graver disputes could only be settled by the sword.

G.P.G.

January 1938

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## ABBREVIATIONS

*G. and T.* = *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, 1898–1914, edited by G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley.

*G.P.* = *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette*, 1871–1914.

*D.D.F.* = *Documents Diplomatiques Français, Troisième Série*.

*A.* = *Österreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik*, 1908–1914.

*Imperialismus* = *Die Internationalen Beziehungen im Zeitalter des Imperialismus. Dokumente aus den Archiven der Zarischen und der Provisorischen Regierung*.

*Benckendorff* = *Graf Benckendorffs Diplomatischer Schriftwechsel*.

*Iswolsky* = *Der Diplomatische Schriftwechsel Iswolskis*, 1911–1914.



GREY



## CHAPTER I

### GREY

#### I

WHEN Grey accepted office in the Campbell-Bannerman Ministry at the end of 1905 he was forty-three years old.<sup>1</sup> He had never seemed young or immature, and he impressed his contemporaries by his detachment from party cries. He belonged to a family in which public service was a tradition, and his passion for country life saved him from the spiritual turmoil which afflicts men to whom politics are all in all. His support of the South African war was regretfully remembered by Gladstonian Liberals, yet no member of the new Ministry could speak in the name of so large a number of his fellow-countrymen in the field of foreign affairs. Knowing little of Europe from travel, friends or books, he was English to the core.

Grey grew up in the school of isolation, but he realised its disadvantages. "The general impression left of our position in the world", he writes of his apprenticeship in the Foreign

<sup>1</sup> Grey's policy must be studied in *G. and T.*, vols. III-XI, in his *Speeches on Foreign Affairs*, ed. by Paul Knaplund, and in his *Twenty-Five Years*. The official biography by Professor Trevelyan and J. A. Spender's *Men and Things* ch. 1, provide an attractive portrait of the man. Gilbert Murray, *The Foreign Policy of Sir E. Grey*; Bertrand Russell, *The Policy of the Entente*, 1904-14; Algernon Cecil in *British Foreign Secretaries*; Ernest F. Henderson, *The Verdict of History*; the *Case of Sir E. Grey* (privately printed); and Hermann Lutz, *Lord Grey und der Weltkrieg*, comment on his doings from various standpoints. Erich Brandenburg, the greatest German authority, criticises both Trevelyan and Grey in *Berliner Monatshefte*, August 1937. Boveri, *Grey und das Foreign Office*, discusses his relations to his subordinates. The following works on the period are useful: G. Lowes Dickinson, *The European Anarchy* 1904-1914; Ensor, *England* 1870-1914; Grant and Temperley, *Europe in the Nineteenth Century*; Kennedy, *Old Diplomacy and New*, 1876-1922; Lee, *King Edward VII*; Harold Nicolson, *Lord Carnock*; Seton-Watson, *Britain in Europe*, 1789-1914; Spender, *Fifty Years of Europe*; Woodward, *Great Britain and the German Navy*; Fay, *The Origins of the World War*; B. E. Schmitt, *The Coming of the War*; Halévy, *Histoire du Peuple Anglais au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, Epilogue 1895-1914; Renouvin, *La Crise Européenne et La Grande Guerre*, 1904-1918; *Histoire Diplomatique de l'Europe* 1871-1914, ed. Hauser; Bourgeois et Pagès, *Les Origines et les Responsabilités de la Grande Guerre*; Brandenburg, *From Bismarck to the World War*; Oncken, *Das Deutsche Reich und die Vorgeschichte des Weltkrieges*; Wahl, *Deutsche Geschichte*, 1871-1914; Friedjung, *Das Zeitalter des Imperialismus*; Pribram, *The Secret Treaties of Austria-Hungary*, 1879-1914; Pribram, *England and Europe*, 1871-1914; Herre, *Die Kleinen Staaten Europas und die Entstehung des Weltkrieges* A. v. Wegerer, *Bibliographie zur Vorgeschichte des Weltkrieges*.

Office during the years 1892-5, "was not comfortable. We relied on German support in Egypt and received it; but we could never be sure when some price for that support might not be exacted. At any moment we were liable to have a serious difference with France or Russia, and it was obvious that these differences were not unwelcome at Berlin. But I had no idea of a change of policy, and I do not think that my chiefs contemplated anything of the kind." He had no leaning at that time to France, and in 1895 he formulated the "Grey declaration" on the valley of the Nile. The events of the following years, however, during which we were surrounded by scowling faces, caused him to acclaim the treaty of 1904. The spirit of the agreement, he declared, was much more important than the letter.<sup>1</sup> The promise of diplomatic support in regard to Egypt and Morocco was vague, but it contained possibilities. "There will be continual opportunities of befriending each other under that one clause alone, if it be interpreted in the spirit in which I believe the agreement is conceived." The glacial epoch had passed. The Franco-Russian alliance had shown that when France became a friend she was an excellent friend. The good will of which the treaty was the expression was based on the recognition that both countries had ceased to be aggressive. It made for peace, and the Government should use it as a working model.

In the autumn of 1905, when a General Election was in sight, Grey delivered a notable speech in the City.<sup>2</sup> His purpose was to combat the rumour that the coming of a Liberal Government might endanger any of the three cardinal features of the time—friendship with the United States, the alliance with Japan, and the agreement with France. The latter had fulfilled the expectations of its makers and the hopes of its friends. There was, however, room for improvement in other directions. We were perfectly ready for new friendships if they did not involve backing out of old ones. If Russia, for instance, whole-heartedly accepted our intention to preserve our Asiatic possessions, no British Government would obstruct her nearer home. "On the contrary it is urgently desirable that Russia's position and influence should be re-established in the councils of Europe. The estrangement between us and Russia has, in my opinion, its roots not in the present but solely in the past. It may be, perhaps it must

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches*, 17-25, June 1, 1904.

<sup>2</sup> *Speeches*, 26-32, October 20, 1905.

be, that confidence between the two countries must be a plant of slow growth; but the conditions should be favourable to its growth, and it should be the business of both Governments to foster and encourage those conditions."

After waving an olive-branch towards St. Petersburg, Grey addressed himself in much cooler tones to Berlin. "If there is a desire for the improvement of our relations with Germany—I do not mean an improvement in the relations of the British and German Governments, because, so far as I know, those are quite correct, but an improvement between the Press and the public opinion of the two countries—if there be a desire for that in Germany, it will meet with no obstacle in this country, provided it be clearly understood that nothing is in any way to impair our existing good relations with France. In other words it must be, in my opinion, a condition of any improvement in the public relations between Germany and ourselves that the relations of Germany with France on all matters which come under the French agreement should be fair and good also. I have dealt with that because I think it is important at the present moment to emphasise the need for continuity in foreign policy."

Here was the programme which Grey was to carry out during the coming years. He was not only Lansdowne's successor but his heir. The break with isolation had already occurred. The Unionist statesman had made friends with France and had begun to cultivate Russia. The Liberal was to build on these foundations, not merely because they were already laid but because he believed them to be the most secure. The friendship of France, so ardently desired and so recently won, must be nurtured like a tender plant. The friendship of Russia, so vital to the rulers of India, must be sought even if her price were high. The friendship of Germany would be welcome if it would be fitted into the framework of the *Entente Cordiale*. The confidence of the United States and Japan had been secured and must be preserved. No Englishman thought of Austria as a potential foe, and with Italy, partner in the Triple Alliance though she was, there was something like a union of hearts. A Foreign Minister takes the whole world for his province, but France, Germany and Russia were the factors that counted most in the never-ending game. How could he realize his dream of living in harmony with them all?



## II

When Grey started work on December 11, 1905, the sky was darkened by the Moroccan cloud. The Algeciras Conference was about to meet. Its programme had been outlined in the Rouvier-Bülow agreements of July 8 and September 28, but the vital issue of the control of the police remained. Both for Paris and Berlin it was a question not merely of material interests but of national prestige. War had been avoided by the sacrifice of Delcassé, but Rouvier was no longer in yielding mood. Germany's threats, which had succeeded in 1905, might be renewed in 1906, and it was vital for France to know what her British friends were likely to do.

A fortnight after Grey was installed in Downing Street Major Huguet, the French Military Attaché, confided to Colonel Repington, Military Correspondent of *The Times*, that the French Embassy felt anxious, not only as to the intentions of Germany, but as to the attitude of the new Government, since Lansdowne's assurances had not been renewed.<sup>1</sup> Repington reported to the Foreign Secretary, who replied from Fallodon on December 30. "I have not receded from anything that Lord Lansdowne said to the French, and have no hesitation in affirming it." Before the question was officially raised by the French Ambassador, he explained his attitude to Metternich on January 3, 1906. He felt uneasy about Morocco. If trouble arose between Germany and France, he thought we should be drawn in. "I said that I could only speak on such a matter as a private individual, my opinion being worth no more than that of Lord Lansdowne speaking in the same way, but the opinion was the same. It was not a question of the policy of the Government; what made a nation most likely to take part in war was not policy or interest but sentiment, and if the circumstances arose public feeling would be so strong that it would be impossible to be neutral." Now was the time to speak frankly. If things went well at Algeciras the entente would not be used afterwards to prejudice the general interests of Germany. We desired to see France on good terms with her neighbour. "This is the one thing necessary to complete the comfort of our own friendship with France, and we shall certainly not egg on France at the Con-

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. III*, ch. 20, and Huguet, *L'Intervention Militaire Britannique en 1914*, ch. 1. *Paul Cambon Par Un Diplomate*, is an admirable study of the great Ambassador but makes no important revelation.

ference further than she wishes herself to go." This explanation seemed necessary because Metternich had recently described the British Government as being "more French than the French." The account of Metternich, on whom Grey made the impression of a thoroughly straightforward man, is almost identical.<sup>1</sup> England, he believed, had no aggressive intentions, but would probably fight if France were involved in war.

On January 9 Grey reported to the Prime Minister in Scotland.<sup>2</sup> "With the French matters stand as Lord Lansdowne left them. I have promised diplomatic support in accordance with Article IX, and have let it be known that we shall give this. I have not said a word of anything more, and the French have asked no inconvenient questions." On the following day, however, the French Ambassador came straight to the point. Cambon did not believe that the Kaiser desired war, but he was pursuing a very dangerous policy. In the Morocco discussion of 1905 it had not seemed necessary to consider the eventuality of war, but now it was. It was unnecessary, and indeed inexpedient, to have a formal alliance; but it was of great importance for the French Government to know beforehand whether, in the event of aggression, Great Britain would help. Grey answered that, with his colleagues dispersed and before the electors had spoken, he could make no reply. He could only state his personal opinion that, if France were to be attacked by Germany in consequence of a question arising out of the recent agreement, public opinion would be strongly moved in her favour. Cambon remarked that he understood the situation and would repeat his inquiry after the elections.

The conversation continued on more or less informal lines. Great Britain, explained Grey, earnestly desired an issue of the Conference at once pacific and favourable to France. Nothing, interjected the Ambassador, would have a more pacifying influence on the Kaiser than the conviction that, if Germany attacked France, she would find England in her path. The Kaiser, rejoined Grey, probably believed this already; but it was one thing that this opinion should be held in Germany, and another that we should give a positive pledge. "I did not believe that any Minister could, in present circumstances, say more than I had done, and, however strong the sympathy of Great Britain might be with France in the case of a rupture

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXI, 45-51, 781-2.

<sup>2</sup> Spender, *Life of Campbell-Bannerman*, II, 249.

with Germany, the expression which might be given to it, and the action which might follow, must depend largely upon the circumstances in which the rupture took place. . . . As far as a definite promise went I was not in a position at present to pledge the country to more than neutrality—a benevolent neutrality if such a thing existed.” Cambon remarked that a promise of neutrality did not satisfy him, and he would repeat the question after the election. Meanwhile he thought it advisable that unofficial communications between the Admiralty and the War Office and the French Naval and Military Attachés should take place. Some exchanges, he believed, had already occurred, and might, he thought, be continued. They did not pledge either Government. “I did not dissent from this view”, concludes Grey’s report.

The divergence between the conversations of January 3 and 10 is apparent. The German Ambassador was told that, in the personal opinion of the Foreign Secretary, under certain circumstances England could not be neutral. The French Ambassador merely secured a promise of benevolent neutrality. Yet Cambon did not depart with empty hands. He believed himself to have secured consent to the conversations between experts which had already begun. Cambon’s report, which he read to Lord Sanderson, the Permanent Under-Secretary, on the following day, only differed in two particulars. In expressing his desire for a peaceful liquidation of the Morocco problem, Grey recommended a very moderate attitude at the Conference, which, Cambon assured him, France intended to adopt. The second difference was more significant. After describing his reference to the military and naval conversations, Cambon concluded: “I expressed the opinion that these communications should be allowed to continue, and Sir Edward Grey said that he saw no objection.” Grey minuted on the report that he did not go so far as to approve communications. “I did not dissent, but I reserved my opinion, because I did not know what they were. I do however approve of their being continued in a proper manner, i.e. with the cognizance of the official heads of the Admiralty and War Office. In the case of the Admiralty I gather that whatever is being done is known to Sir John Fisher. I have now spoken to Mr. Haldane as regards the War Office, and he is willing that the French Military Attaché should communicate with General Grierson. The communications must be solely provisional and non-committal.”

Grey's declarations on the Morocco crisis committed neither his colleagues nor the nation to anything fresh, but the authorisation of military discussions broke new ground. In a second interview on January 15 he told Cambon that, as he would not see the Prime Minister and the rest of his colleagues before the end of the month, he could not at present answer his question about military support. He added that, with the assent of the Secretary for War, the military discussions which had taken place through an intermediary might proceed between the French Military Attaché and General Grierson, though it must be understood that they did not commit either Government. On the same day Lord Sanderson wrote to General Grierson that the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary for War "agree to your entering into communications with the French Military Attaché here for the purpose of obtaining such information as you require as to the methods in which military assistance could in case of need be best afforded by us to France and vice versa. Such communications must be solely provisional and non-committal. Sir E. Grey sees no objection to similar inquiries being addressed by our Military Attaché at Brussels to the Belgian Military Authorities as to the manner in which, in case of need, British assistance could be most effectually afforded to Belgium for the defence of her neutrality". "We were a little surprised," confesses Huguet, the French Military Attaché, "by the readiness with which the authorisation was granted. Campbell-Bannerman, Grey and Haldane were too clever not to realise that the studies now to be pursued would—whatever the qualifications—constitute a moral engagement."

Grey embodied his reflections in a private letter to our Ambassador at Paris. "You will have seen from the official despatch that Cambon has put the great question to me. Diplomatic support we are pledged to give and are giving. A promise in advance committing this country to take part in a Continental war is another matter and a very serious one; it is very difficult for any British Government to give an engagement of that kind. It changes the entente into an alliance, and alliances, especially continental alliances, are not in accordance with our traditions. My opinion is that, if France is let in for a war with Germany arising out of our agreement with her about Morocco, we cannot stand aside, but must take part with France. But a deliberate engagement pledging this country in advance before the actual cause of the war is known or appar-

ent, given in cold blood, goes far beyond anything the late Government said or as far as I know contemplated. If we give any promise of armed assistance it must be conditional. . . . Meanwhile I should like to have your views of the answer which should be given : my own are still in solution and I have not yet determined what proposal I shall make to the Prime Minister."

When on January 31 Cambon repeated his question, Grey was ready with his reply. A good deal of progress, he began, had been made. Military and naval experts had been in consultation, and he assumed that all preparations were ready in case of a crisis. He had informed the German Ambassador of his personal opinion that, in the event of an attack arising out of the Morocco agreement, public feeling would compel the Government to intervene. Passing to "the great question" he argued that the existing relationship was so satisfactory as to need no formal declaration. At present France had an absolutely free hand. If, however, we promised more than the diplomatic support assured under the Treaty, we should have to be consulted with regard to French policy in Morocco, and we might have to urge concessions with a view of avoiding war. These arguments produced no effect on Cambon, who repeated his request for some verbal assurance. Such an assurance, replied Grey, could be nothing short of a written undertaking authorised by the Cabinet. Though his colleagues were well disposed to France, it would be difficult to formulate. It would not be given unconditionally and it would be hard to describe the conditions. Any change would transform the "Entente" into a defensive alliance. Was not the force of circumstances, which was bringing England and France together, stronger than any assurance in words? A defensive alliance might develop some day under the pressure of circumstances, but the necessity had not arisen. As to British action in the event of a German attack, much would depend on the manner in which war broke out. The conversation might be re-opened at any time if the French desired.

"I had tremendously difficult talk and work yesterday and very important", wrote Grey to his wife on the following day; "I do not know that I did well but I did honestly." He declined an alliance, for which the country was unprepared, but he expressed his private opinion, as Lansdowne had done, that we should support France if she were wantonly attacked in connexion with Morocco. The conversations of January 3

and January 31 must be taken together. "My object in these interviews", he wrote twenty years later, "was to make the Germans understand that the situation was serious, and let the French feel that we were sympathetic, while carefully avoiding anything that might raise expectations in their minds which this country might not fulfil. To do this it was necessary to avoid bluff in the one case and promises in the other".

When Sanderson called on Cambon two days after the interview of January 31 to compare the two versions, he found him on the whole satisfied. The Ambassador could hardly have hoped that Grey would go beyond Lansdowne in assuming obligations, though he pressed him to do so. Any disappointment was outweighed by the authorisation of conversations between the military experts. It was all very well to declare that the problem of military co-operation must be studied academically. No limiting formula could alter the fact that the situation had changed. Promises had been declined, but expectations were created. "I do not like the stress laid upon joint preparations", wrote the Prime Minister, himself a warm friend of France. "It comes very close to an honourable understanding: and it will be known on both sides of the Rhine." Despite this inherent difficulty it was almost impossible to veto official discussions. How could effective help be given without them? Though the Conference was about to meet, the French feared that Germany might strike a sudden blow. The Delcassé crisis was fresh in the memory of the Rouvier Cabinet, France was as unready for war as in June 1905, and Russia was unable to help. Grey inherited the treaty commitment of 1904 and the Lansdowne declarations of 1905. Since no German attack took place and there is no evidence that it was ever planned, it is easy to argue that it was a false alarm. That, however, could not be known with certainty at the time. By the opening of 1906 British statesmen had ceased to feel confidence in Berlin. The responsibility of making rapid decisions in view of grave hypothetical dangers is the most unenviable of a statesman's tasks.

If there is room for disagreement on the question whether the authorisation should have been postponed till the Cabinet could meet, and whether even then it should have been given at all, the omission to inform the Cabinet of a step of such significance was a deplorable mistake for which the Prime Minister no less than the Foreign Secretary must be held responsible. The authorisation of military conversations was a new depar-

ture, and should have been reported at the earliest opportunity. In his speech of August 3, 1914, Grey excused himself on the ground that the crisis passed "and the thing ceased to be of importance". Though further reflection led him to change his view, to the end of his life he asserted that a Cabinet discussion would have made no practical difference. Backed by the authority of Campbell-Bannerman and Ripon, the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary for War, the policy would have aroused nothing beyond a little grumbling. The cause of concealment right down to 1911 and 1912 was not the desire to hide guilty secrets from his colleagues but, as he himself confesses, inexperience. Neither the Foreign Secretary nor the colleagues consulted by him appeared to realise how far they had gone in transforming the strictly limited Morocco obligation into a working partnership, perhaps involving co-operation in war. What was dimly discerned in London was more clearly realised in Paris and Berlin: a far-reaching change in the balance of power had begun.

### III

From the moment of his appointment Grey was occupied with the problem of Morocco.<sup>1</sup> On December 14, 1905, Sir Arthur Nicolson, the British Ambassador in Madrid, received his instructions for the forthcoming Conference. He was to give cordial support to the proposals of his French colleague and to encourage his Spanish colleague to do the same. To the German Ambassador Grey explained that we should not initiate any discussions.<sup>2</sup> "I might say generally that we should go into the Conference with no desire or intention whatever of acting in any way hostile to Germany, but that we were bound to keep in a thorough manner the engagements which we had undertaken to France in the Anglo-French Declarations of April 1904, and until the Conference got to work we could not say how far those engagements would be found reconcilable with German policy." Metternich's report of the conversation concluded on a hopeful note. "If we can get through the Morocco Conference without a permanent worsening of German-French relations, I see reason to hope

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. III*, ch. 21; Nicolson, *Lord Carnock*, ch. 7; Tardieu, *La Conférence d'Algéiras*; Anderson, *The First Moroccan Crisis*; Nevins, *Henry White*, ch. 16; Morel, *Morocco in Diplomacy*.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T. III*, 161 and *G.P. XX*, 685-90.

that our relations with England will be straightened out within reasonable time."

Grey's policy at Algeciras was to keep the *Entente Cordiale* alive. So far from this involving unfriendliness to Germany, he looked round for an opportunity of doing her a good turn. "In more than one part of the world", he wrote to Campbell-Bannerman on January 9, 1906, "I find that Germany is feeling after a coaling station or a port. Everywhere we block this. I am not an expert on naval strategy, but I doubt whether it is important for us to prevent Germany getting ports at a distance from her base; and the moment may come when a timely admission that it is not a cardinal object of British policy to prevent her having such a port may have a great pacific effect. It may, for instance, turn out that a port for Germany on the west Atlantic coast of Morocco would solve all the difficulties of the Morocco Conference, and be regarded by the French as a means of obtaining the recognition which they want in Morocco without prejudicing their interests in the long run." The Admiralty or the Committee of Imperial Defence should be consulted. At no moment of his life could Grey be described as pro-German, but this is not the letter of a Germanophobe. In writing it he was unaware that Lansdowne had vetoed such a plan in the previous year, and that to have proposed it to the French would have endangered the Entente. So little was the new Minister aware of the pitfalls around him. The reconciliation with France was a blessing, but it was purchased at a high price. Henceforth advances to Germany were difficult if not impossible, for no political engineer could span the gulf between Paris and Berlin.

The crux of the Conference was the control of the police in the ports. If a mandate for France, or for France and Spain, to carry out reforms were proposed, declared Metternich to Grey on January 23, Germany would reject it.<sup>1</sup> Though neither Germany nor France was in yielding mood, Grey was not seriously alarmed, for he did not believe that Germany wanted to fight. "I am afraid the result of the Conference is likely to be no better than you anticipate", he wrote privately to Nicolson on February 12. "It seems to be recognised, however, that we have acted up to the letter and in the spirit of the Anglo-French engagements, and this is very greatly due to you. . . . I wish I could make any useful suggestion, but my impression is that the Germans do not want the Conference to

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXI, 103-5



arrive at any solution which is acceptable to France on the lines of our Entente with her. Such a favourable issue would be regarded as a diplomatic defeat of Germany. Were it otherwise it is obvious that she would agree to the ports being policed by France and Spain under the authority of the Sultan, and would concentrate herself on economic guarantees for the open door—50 years instead of 30 and so forth.” Time, he added, was on the side of France. “For the recovery of Russia will change the situation in Europe to the advantage of France; and it is the situation in Europe that will in the long run decide the position of France and Germany respectively in Morocco. I am in hopes that when Russia recovers we may get and keep on good terms with her; if so, this will also count on the side of France.” Thus, if the sky overhead was gloomy, there were gleams of light in the East.

Two days later, on February 14, Grey and Metternich discussed the situation.<sup>1</sup> In the German view, declared the Ambassador, the police should be organised with officers from the minor Powers, the whole force being placed under an officer appointed by the diplomatic corps at Tangier. The only Powers qualified to organise the police effectively, retorted Grey, were France and Spain. The maintenance of order was essential to trade. The British representative had kept well within the limits of our treaty obligations, and the French attitude had been most moderate and reasonable. Germany’s object, rejoined Metternich, was to prevent France from getting a monopoly or a paramount interest in Morocco, which her control of the police would ensure. The organisation of the police at the ports, interjected Grey, could not endanger the economic interests of other Powers, and France would be associated with Spain. The control of the police, replied Metternich, was the starting-point from which France would acquire a predominant position in Morocco inconsistent with equal rights and opportunities. No other Powers, argued Grey, had objected to Franco-Spanish control. Nor had they objected to the internationalisation of the police, rejoined the Ambassador. Morocco had great possibilities. It was one of the few places still left open, and Germany could not see her prospects sacrificed. The conversation was friendly, but neither party yielded an inch.

On February 19 Metternich communicated the instructions to the German plenipotentiary to resist Franco-Spanish

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* III, 254-5 and *G.P.* XXI, 164-6.

control, adding that he who had the police had Morocco.<sup>1</sup> France realised that fact, and was prepared to wreck the Conference for her aim. Grey expressed his regret at the complete deadlock. If the Conference failed owing to Germany's rejection of a proposal acceptable to the other Powers, it would postpone a rapprochement between London and Berlin. If England always used the Entente to side with France against Germany, snapped the Ambassador, Germany would have to regard her as her enemy. There had been no question of always siding with France, replied Grey. Morocco was the only case, and it was covered by the treaty. If that difficulty were removed, the British Government hoped to show that the entente was not to be operated in an anti-German sense. When Metternich remarked that, even if the Conference failed, Germany did not desire war with France, Grey replied that it was much too soon to talk of anything so serious. "I could only say again that in such an event public feeling in England would be so strong that the British Government would be involved in it, and that was why I was so anxious to find a possible solution." Here was a second warning to Berlin.

Grey was now thoroughly alarmed. "The German Ambassador asked to see me yesterday", he wrote in a pregnant Memorandum, "for the purpose of telling me that his Government had met the last proposal of the French about police in Morocco with a point blank refusal. If the Conference breaks up without result, the situation will be very dangerous. Germany will endeavour to establish her influence in Morocco at the expense of France. France, to counteract this, or even to protect herself and a neighbour from the state of disturbance which is now chronic in Morocco, will be driven to take action in Morocco, which Germany may make a *casus belli*. If there is war between France and Germany it will be very difficult for us to keep out of it. The *Entente* and still more the constant and emphatic demonstrations of affection (official, naval, political, commercial, municipal and in the Press), have created in France a belief that we should support her in war. The last report from our Naval Attaché at Toulon said that all the French officers took this for granted, if the war was between France and Germany about Morocco. If this expectation is disappointed the French will never forgive us. There would also I think be a general feeling in every country that we had behaved meanly and left France in the lurch. The

<sup>1</sup> G. and T. III, 263-4, and G.P. XXI, 179-181, 185-7.

United States would despise us, Russia would not think it worth while to make a friendly arrangement with us about Asia, Japan would prepare to re-insure herself elsewhere, we should be left without a friend and without the power of making a friend, and Germany would take some pleasure, after what has passed, in exploiting the whole situation to our disadvantage, very likely by stirring up trouble through the Sultan of Turkey in Egypt. As a minor matter the position of any Foreign Secretary here, who had made it an object to maintain the entente with France, would become intolerable.

“On the other hand the prospect of a European war and of our being involved in it is horrible. I propose therefore, if unpleasant symptoms develop after the Conference is over, to tell the French Ambassador that a great effort and if need be some sacrifice should in our opinion be made to avoid war. To do this we should have to find out what compensation Germany would ask or accept as the price of her recognition of the French claims in Morocco. I should myself be in favour of allowing Germany a port or coaling station if that would ensure peace; but it would be necessary to consult the Admiralty about this, and to find out whether the French would entertain the idea, and if so what port? The real objection to the course proposed is that the French may think it pusillanimous and a poor result of the *Entente*. I should have to risk this. I hope the French would recognise that in a war with Germany our liabilities would be much less than theirs. We should risk little or nothing on land, and at sea we might shut the German fleet up in Kiel and keep it there without losing a ship or a man or even firing a shot. The French would have a life and death struggle and that expenditure of blood and treasure with a doubtful issue. They ought therefore not to think it pusillanimous on our part to wish to avoid a war in which our danger was so much less than theirs.”

The Memorandum concluded with considerations of a wider character. “The door is being kept open by us for a rapprochement with Russia; there is at least a prospect that when Russia is re-established we shall find ourselves on good terms with her. An *entente* between Russia, France and ourselves would be absolutely secure. If it is necessary to check Germany it could then be done. The present is the most unfavourable moment for attempting to check her. Is it not a grave mistake, if there must be a quarrel with Germany, for France or ourselves to let Germany choose the moment which

best suits her? There is a possibility that war may come before these suggestions of mine can be developed in diplomacy. If so it will only be because Germany has made up her mind that she wants war and intends to have it anyhow, which I do not believe is the case. But I think we ought in our own minds to face the question now, whether we can keep out of war if war breaks out between France and Germany. The more I review the situation the more it appears to me that we cannot, without losing our good name and our friends and wrecking our policy and position in the world." In this historic document, in which we hear the Foreign Secretary thinking aloud, are enshrined the principles and sentiments which were to govern his action throughout—support of French claims in Morocco, distrust of German intentions, the dream of a Triple Entente, and the conviction that in the event of a Franco-German war we could not stand aside.

Grey's arguments produced no effect in Berlin, and he could hardly press France to modify proposals which he approved. Fortunately there were other Powers better placed for purposes of mediation. President Roosevelt, a *persona grata* on both sides of the Rhine, was at work behind the scenes, and Austria strove to avert a conflict about a country in which she possessed no interests. The Austrian Chargé asked Grey on February 26 whether he anticipated danger if the Conference failed. "No, nothing imminent; but undoubtedly, with the disturbance continuing in Morocco, a state of general uneasiness would continue through Europe; and I impressed upon him how impossible it was to improve the relations between England and Germany as long as there was this dispute between Germany and France about a matter on which we had an Agreement with France which was publicly known to the whole world, and which had been the very beginning of our friendship with France. If that difficulty were out of the way, the whole political sky in Europe would be cleared." When the Chargé asked whether commercial competition would still continue to produce a bad effect, Grey replied that it did not affect political relations.

A new chapter opened when Germany accepted an Austrian proposal for French and Spanish police at seven ports if a Dutch or Swiss officer or instructor were in control at the eighth and acted as Inspector of the whole police organisation. Though Grey and Nicolson were delighted, France rejected the plan that the Inspector should act as Instructor at a port.

At the request of his French colleague Nicolson begged the German plenipotentiary to give way on this point. The German Government, was the reply, had spoken its last word. Nicolson, who believed him, told the French plenipotentiary that there could be no question of breaking up the Conference on that issue when a favourable solution was in sight. Révoil was disappointed, but, unlike Nicolson, he believed that Germany would yield. Grey agreed with Nicolson, and told Cambon that the French should accept the Swiss at Casablanca rather than let the Conference fail. "I was sure that opinion here and impartial opinion everywhere regarded Germany as having given way on seven-eighths of the question; she had, in order to save a little prestige, reserved this one small point which could not in practice endanger French interests, for it would not bring in Germany, who apparently asks nothing for herself." Yet, while urging the French acceptance, he begged Germany not to spoil the game by making a vital matter of neutral police at Casablanca.<sup>1</sup>

Grey yielded reluctantly to French intransigence, and Paris was informed that we should continue our support. He and Nicolson had made the disagreeable discovery that diplomatic solidarity might identify us with tactics which we disapproved. "I think the French made a great mistake in not closing at once with the German concession at Algeciras", he wrote to Bertie. "They could have made it appear to be a diplomatic victory for themselves. It was so regarded by everybody outside France at the time. Now of course it is too late. Had the Conference broken up before the Austrian proposal as to the police was made, Germany would have been to blame; public opinion in Europe and (what is more important) public opinion in England would have looked upon her as a tiresome bully. Now, if there is a break up, people will say that France is unreasonable and did not know how to take her advantage when she had it. You can see that even *The Times* Correspondent at Algeciras thinks France ought not to break off on such a wretched point as Casablanca, which I believe is a useless hole. However, if she does, we shall back her up."

The danger of offering advice to France was brought home by a telegram from Bertie on March 15. Several influential Deputies were trying to persuade Bourgeois, who had succeeded Rouvier as Foreign Minister, that the Liberal Government would adopt the policy of isolation. Nicolson's advice

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* III, 302 and *G.P.* XXI, 282-4.

about Casablanca, they argued, was the first sign of the intention to withdraw support. Bourgeois, being new to the work, was very anxious and did not know what to believe. Incensed by what he describes as a bomb, Grey wired indignantly that there had never been any question of discontinuing our support of France. "We have given it throughout at Algeciras and in every capital in Europe where required, and shall continue this so long as the French wish it and trust us. Cordial co-operation with France in all parts of the world remains a cardinal point of British policy, and in some respects we have carried it farther than the late Government here were required to do. Any advice Nicolson has given to Révoil has been on the understanding that this support would be continued." On the following day Bertie telegraphed that the French were reassured, and a week later Germany gave way on Casablanca. The end of the Conference was in sight, and it was generally conceded that France had won the match. It seemed almost a miracle that the entente survived, wrote Grey in his Memoirs. "One false step, one indiscreet or incautious word, one necessary word delayed or unspoken at the critical moment, and the result might have been fatal. I was at any rate more alive to the delicacy of the situation at the end of the Conference than I had been at the beginning." His reward for the ceaseless anxiety of his first three months in office was the conviction that French confidence had increased.

Grey had passed safely through his first ordeal, but he had learned on what stormy waters we were sailing. Diplomatic support in Morocco was an elastic formula. It was difficult to be the intimate friend of France without also being in some degree the friend of her friends and the enemy of her enemies. He had been compelled to back a claim which he disapproved, and in advising the acceptance of an Austro-German compromise he had let loose a tempest of suspicion. France had recovered from her scare in 1905. She had stood out for her full demand for Franco-Spanish control of all the eight ports, and Germany had given way because neither Bülow nor his master wished to fight. Another time, perhaps, they might be in less yielding mood. If France attacked her neighbour, neither Grey nor any of his countrymen ever dreamed of affording her aid. But a conflict might arise out of a step which, though not actually aggressive, he could not conscientiously approve. Was diplomatic support to stiffen into military assistance? The treaty made no such demand. Yet

if, without our intervention, France were to be defeated, Germany would dominate Europe. The Algeciras Conference revealed how closely we were bound and how little we could control French policy. In the words of Tardieu the entente had passed from the static to the dynamic. Never for a moment did Grey challenge the utility of the great reconciliation, but he was now more aware of the price we had paid. We had sacrificed a portion of our independence, and the difficulty of improving our relations with Germany had been increased. Co-operation with France seemed less dangerous than isolation, but there were precipices at the side of the road. On the one hand the policy of Continental commitments increased the probability of a war with Germany by involving us in the quarrels of our friends. On the other it seemed to ensure that, if a conflict arose, we should not be left to fight it out alone.

#### IV

When the Treaty of Algeciras was signed, Grey turned his attention to Russia.<sup>1</sup> The Unionists had wisely decided to seek a solution of outstanding difficulties in the Middle East, and the Liberals built on their foundations. An agreement with Russia was the natural sequel to the agreement with France, the sole alternative to the old methods of friction and drift. The emergence of a constitutional movement in Persia increased the rivalry at Teheran and emphasised the desirability of a *détente*. A rapprochement was impeded by the fact that, as Grey expressed it, Russian despotism was repugnant to British ideals. Yet the need of the two countries to remove a hampering antagonism outweighed the divergence of ideologies.

On December 13, 1905, two days after entering the Foreign Office, Grey expressed his hope to the Russian Ambassador that an agreement on outstanding questions might be reached.<sup>2</sup> Benckendorff replied that he was responsible for the suspension of the negotiations, since progress was impossible owing to internal conditions in Russia. Grey rejoined that he would not press any questions at the moment, and would avoid

<sup>1</sup> G. and T. IV. Very few Russian documents at present are available. Iswo'sky, *Correspondance Diplomatique*, 1906-1911, Vol. I (1937) contains Benckendorff's private letters to his chief. Poltz, *Die Anglo-Russische Entente* 1903-1907, is a careful summary of the documentary material. Oncken, *Die Sicherheit Indiens*, views the rapprochement in broad perspective.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

anything which might make a settlement more difficult. Official discussions had to wait, but powerful influences were at work. Witte hinted that, if sympathy took shape in a loan, he could guarantee the conclusion of a satisfactory treaty ; the Tsar expressed his wish for a visit from King Edward ; and the joint backing of France at Algeciras pointed the way towards a Triple Entente. Three events of a personal character quickened the flowing tide. Hardinge, a convinced advocate of Anglo-Russian co-operation, was transferred from St. Petersburg to follow Lord Sanderson as Permanent Under-Secretary ; he was succeeded by Nicolson, the chief British representative at the Algeciras Conference ; and the timid Lamsdorff was replaced by Iswolsky, who brought from Copenhagen a programme of Anglo-Russian friendship. The aim of Russia, after the collapse in the Far East, was to re-establish her position in Europe, but her need of a rapprochement was no greater than our own. Grey longed to remove the causes of friction with Russia as Lansdowne had removed the causes of trouble with France, and above all to guarantee India against Russian intrigue or attack. Moreover there was now a further motive, for the safety and welfare of France had become a paramount British interest.

On March 19, 1906, when the Algeciras crisis was over, Benckendorff brought a friendly communication from his chief. The Russian Government had noticed with satisfaction how England had tended to co-operate in Crete, Macedonia and Morocco. Grey welcomed the message, adding that Russia might perhaps wish to go farther and to have something in the nature of an entente, such as we had with France. Owing to the unsettled internal conditions, replied the Ambassador, it was difficult for his Government to make offers which might be used against them. Every arrangement, rejoined Grey, must have two sides, and we should expect guarantees for the security of our Indian frontier. There had been no difficulty in co-operating in Europe. In Asia it would be easier now than a few years ago. We had done our best to keep the door open for agreement ; for instance we had declined to lend money to Persia. Benckendorff remarked that Russia would have little difficulty in meeting our wishes in regard to the Indian frontier, but gave no hint of her desires. Detailed discussions only commenced when Nicolson reached St. Petersburg in May.

Tongues began to wag, and on May 24 Grey replied to a



question in the House of Commons. "I cannot make any statement about the alleged agreement as described in the Press, because such an agreement does not exist. But I may add that there had been an increasing tendency for England and Russia to deal in a friendly way with questions concerning them both as they arise. This has on more than one occasion lately led the two Governments to find themselves in co-operation. It is a tendency which we shall be very glad to encourage, and which, if it continues, will naturally result in the progressive settlement of questions in which each country has an interest, and in strengthening friendly relations between them." It was a guarded declaration, but it showed which way the wind blew. Grey explained to Benckendorff that nothing was further from his thoughts than to use friendship with Russia as a lever to create difficulties with Germany. As in the case of our entente with France, we should not regard it as directed against any other Power. Though he had not put forward any general proposals for an entente, the Baghdad Railway and events in Persia might lead towards a general agreement. To the Japanese Ambassador, who inquired about Anglo-Russian relations, he replied that we were undoubtedly on friendlier terms than in recent years. British participation in a big loan, for the first time since the Crimean War, told its own tale.

The British strategy was to make sacrifices in Persia and to invite them in Tibet and Afghanistan. Nicolson took with him our proposals for Tibet, but nothing else. Russia was to recognise, as we had already done, the suzerainty of China, to respect the integrity of Tibet, and to abstain from interference in her affairs. She was also to recognise our special interest that her external relations were not disturbed. Neither Government was to send a representative to Lhasa, nor to ask for concessions for railways, roads, telegraphs, mining or other rights. No Tibetan revenues should be pledged to the Government or subjects of either Power. Though prolonged discussions ensued, Tibet presented no serious difficulties, and British demands were substantially met.

On September 7 Nicolson was authorised to open discussions on Afghanistan. Russia should acknowledge the country to be outside her sphere of influence and under British guidance in all matters of external policy ; but there might be direct communications between Russian and Afghan officials on local and non-political matters. She was neither to send

agents into the country nor to subsidise her trade, but she might have the same trading facilities as British subjects. The discussion did not begin till February 1907. A Russian counterdraft, presented in May, endeavoured to limit our activities. Great Britain was neither to annex nor occupy territory nor to interfere in internal affairs. The veto was accepted subject to the fulfilment of the Ameer's treaty engagements. As Grey pointed out, the fear that we might annex or occupy territory was the chief incentive to the ruler to keep his word. This important qualification was accepted by Iswolsky, but the resolve to exclude Russia from all political influence led to anxious debate. The result was fairly satisfactory, except the proviso that the new arrangements would only become operative when the British Government notified the Ameer's assent. It was always doubtful whether he would swallow the diminution of his sovereign rights, and in fact his acceptance was never secured.

The main battle was waged in Persia. Iswolsky desired a settlement in Middle Asia as much as Grey, but he had far more domestic resistance to overcome. Though the Government of India, with its traditional distrust of Russia, disliked the whole project, the India Office co-operated helpfully throughout. The larger purpose was to terminate the Anglo-Russian antagonism, the narrower aim to secure the Indian frontier. The best protection would be that the great Slav Power should no longer desire to threaten it. Her price would be high in any case, and after her concessions in Tibet and Afghanistan it must be higher still. Since the negotiations were confined to Middle Asia, it could only be found in Persia. Success depended on ungrudging recognition of her preponderance in the north. Seistan, of course, would have to be within our zone ; but, with that exception, the less resistance to Russian aims in Persia the better the prospect of a deal.

On September 7, 1906, Nicolson was instructed to tell Iswolsky that, if he desired to discuss Persia, we were ready to receive proposals. The reform movement was gathering strength, and unless the Governments kept in touch friction was inevitable. In addition to the clash of commercial interests there was a genuine difference of sentiment, Great Britain sympathising with the Constitutionalists, Russia leaning towards the Shah. In return for a guarantee of non-interference in Seistan, wrote Grey to King Edward, it would be necessary to give Russia an equal guarantee regarding part of

the north and west, and eventually she would have to obtain commercial access to the Persian Gulf. "If the mouth of the Gulf is retained in the British sphere of interest, such an arrangement could hardly be regarded as a serious menace to the security of India by sea; and meanwhile, if Russia ceased to push her influence by telegraphs, roads and other means in the Seistan triangle, the security of India from any menace on land would be complete."

While laying his cards on the table in regard to Tibet and Afghanistan, Grey desired Russia to make the first move elsewhere. "I am not anxious to hurry matters about Persia now," he wrote to Nicolson on October 3. "We have shown enough of our hand to convince the Russians that a fair agreement with us is a practicable policy. We may now wait for them to produce the proposals, which M. Iswolsky says he has prepared, though he cannot disclose them yet". The Russian statesman was waiting till he had cleared the ground by a visit to Berlin. King Edward, hearing that he was in Paris, desired him to extend his journey to London, but Grey was relieved when the invitation was declined. "It would give rise to rumours in excess of the truth", he wrote to Bertie; "negotiations were not ripe for a visit here, and to press him to come would give an impression that we wanted to hustle him".

"It is desirable", telegraphed Grey on October 31, "that M. Iswolsky should feel that we expect to make progress with Persian negotiations after his return from Berlin. It will be well to make our line include Kerman if possible. It would be better to avoid the use of the term spheres of influence. The first point should be agreement between ourselves and Russia that neither of us will seek or maintain influence in the districts which border upon the territory of the other. These districts we will define with each other. We can then get from the Persian Government an assurance not to allow either district to be disturbed by admitting another Power to interests in it." In a private letter to Nicolson on the same day he revealed more of his thoughts. "Iswolsky knows that we must be suspicious of his visits to Germany, and I should like him to feel that we expect some frankness as to what passed between him and the Germans, and some progress with the negotiations, in order to prove to us that the Germans are not putting spokes in the wheel."

Far from placing obstacles in the way, Berlin smiled on the Anglo-Russian discussions. Iswolsky's difficulties were with

the General Staff, which disliked surrender in Seistan. So great were they that Bompard, the French Ambassador in St. Petersburg, believed that Iswolsky alone could remove them.<sup>1</sup> Grey forwarded a draft agreement recording the principle of zones of influence, and suggesting the boundaries of a British zone in which Russia should not seek political or commercial concessions. Great Britain was equally to abstain from seeking concessions within a Russian zone left undefined. Despite this attempt to set the ball rolling, as he described it, it was not till February 20, 1907, that Iswolsky produced a counter-draft, which Grey welcomed as a satisfactory basis for discussion. The discussions now moved forward without interruption. Attempts by both sides to enlarge their scope were made without success. Iswolsky desired to deal with the question of the Straits, while Grey coveted recognition of our special interests in the Gulf. Each party, however, while pressing its own claim, pointed out that the demand of the other side involved third party interests and might produce complications. Thus the Convention signed on August 31, 1907, was confined to the three problems of Persia, Tibet and Afghanistan. "I am sure that the best has been done in the circumstances", wrote Nicolson to his wife, "and the only alternative was no agreement at all."

Grey was fortunate in his collaborators. Morley never hesitated to override the Government of India when the Cabinet had made up its mind, and Nicolson received bouquets from King Edward and his chief. "I can't tell you", wrote the latter, "how much all of us who have been cognizant of the Russian negotiations admire the way you have handled them. We shall have to keep the Russians up to the spirit of the Agreement in dealing with their local agents. Cambon said to me yesterday that we had got much the best of the Agreement, and on my remarking that it would be criticised in some quarters in this country he said: 'Those who criticise will do so without knowledge; you have secured a great part of the Persian littoral, strengthened your position as regards the Gulf, and obtained a recognition of your Protectorate of Afghanistan. The interior of Persia of which the Russians have so much is mountains and desert, or words to that effect.'" Cambon was too flattering, for Russia had secured the lion's share of Persia, including the principal cities; but such a testimonial from an experienced diplomatist was praise indeed.

<sup>1</sup> Bompard, *Mon Ambassade en Russie* (1903-9), 273-4.

Grey's first pronouncement was in a speech to his constituents at the close of the year.<sup>1</sup> "There is in it, I trust, not merely the actual letter of the provisions of the agreements, but also an intention on the part of both Governments that there should be a change of general policy with regard to each other." So far as agreements could secure anything, we had safeguarded the Indian frontier without sacrificing our commercial prospects in Persia. The country was in revolution, and the Convention had removed the temptation for either Power to interfere. "The full effect of the Anglo-Russian agreement no doubt depends upon the working of it, and you will not know what that full effect will be until a few years have passed. If it is worked as it is intended, in a faithful and friendly spirit on each side, it will dissipate jealousy and suspicion, it will relieve both nations from the strain of anxiety, and, by removing one cause of friction, it will enable the two nations to treat all other matters which may arise between them in the future in a friendly spirit." Here was the case for the treaty in a nutshell. The Indian frontier had been safeguarded and a formidable rival had been turned into a friend.

The Convention was signed after Parliament had risen, and it was not till February 17, 1908, that it came under review. In the Unionist party there were two schools of thought represented by Curzon and Lansdowne. To the former it was a shameful surrender, to the latter the right thing done to some extent in the wrong way. In responding to a slashing attack by Earl Percy, who belonged to the Russophobe school, Grey delivered one of the most memorable speeches of his life.<sup>2</sup> He was charged with not making a comprehensive settlement like that of 1904. Had he attempted it, there would have been no settlement at all. The situation in Persia demanded an agreement as the only alternative to interference by both Powers and friction between them there and elsewhere. Strategical considerations had been paramount. The danger of Russia pushing into Seistan and reaching the south coast of Persia had been removed. To the charge that great commercial prospects had been sacrificed in the north, the reply was that nothing had been given up that had not already gone. As regards the Persian Gulf Russia had not contested our special interests. In Afghanistan we had scored, and our sacrifices in Tibet were trifles.

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches*, 38-43, December 19, 1907.

<sup>2</sup> *Speeches*, 55-76.

At the conclusion of his speech Grey dealt with criticisms of a general character. He had been rebuked for negotiating with a Power whose internal policy was not to our taste. Any attempts to exercise pressure on the domestic concerns of Russia would have produced national resentment. To the complaint that Persia's interests had suffered he rejoined that the definition of spheres of influence involved neither partition nor any diminution of independence and integrity. The chance of working out her constitutional problems in her own way would be greatly improved. The absence of an agreement would have led inevitably to friction in Persia and perhaps to war. The relations of the two Powers must have become better or worse. "You cannot command opportunities, and if you neglect or reject one, you may not have it again." Russia's good faith was doubted in certain quarters. "I do not myself believe that, when once between England and Russia a belief in good will is established on both sides, it will be repaid by bad faith on either side. If that be gained, the benefits in the long run—the relief which will come from anxiety and the permanent contribution to peace—will be such that any criticism made upon the agreement to-day will be regarded as mere dust in the balance." In the words of the veteran Lord Sanderson, to which nothing can be added, it was the best settlement that circumstances allowed.

## V

The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 produced a *détente*, not an entente, for there were bitter memories on both sides to live down; but with the return of confidence a new intimacy developed. At last there seemed a ray of hope for Macedonia, which Turkish misrule, combined with the activities of Greek and Bulgarian bands, had reduced to utter misery.<sup>1</sup> The results of the reforms of 1903–1905 were disappointing, and for his first two years at the Foreign Office Grey seemed to display less zeal than his predecessor. A deputation in July 1907 organised by the Balkan Committee and introduced by the Archbishop of Canterbury was distressed by his chilly response. Convinced that nothing could be done at the moment, he bore the reproaches of his friends in silence and bided his time.

Things at Constantinople looked very bad, wrote Grey to his Ambassador at Constantinople on December 17, 1907, and

<sup>1</sup> G. and T. V, chs. 30–36.

it seemed clear that a conciliatory policy produced no effect. "It is quite evident that we must go on another tack, and I am considering what our policy should be. I do not wish you to keep nagging away about small points connected with Macedonia or any other matters which cannot be settled by small things. . . . Meanwhile I shall bring the Macedonian question to a head by asking the Powers whether they will consent to press for executive control and increase of the Gendarmerie. Judicial reforms being now, as I understand, settled, and there being nothing to do but to wait for the reply of the Porte, which will no doubt be unsatisfactory, I shall not press for coercive measures with regard to judicial reforms alone, seeing that they will not cure the chief evils of Macedonia. Nor am I prepared, as regards Macedonia, to resort to coercive measures without the consent of the other Powers. My policy would be to invite the other Powers to join in putting forward some thorough-going scheme of reforms which would really be effective, and force the Porte to accept the scheme. If the Powers would not do this, I should then state the fact in Parliament, and say that there was nothing more to be done as long as they were of this mind."

The announcement that Aehrenthal had obtained a concession for a railway through the Sanjak of Novibazar determined Grey to wait no longer. Austria, he wrote to O'Connor on February 10, 1908, had played the mean game of driving a bargain with the Porte in favour of her railway scheme at the expense of Macedonian reform. "It seems now that we are to be in the position of having all the odium at Constantinople of pressing reforms, while other members of the Concert curry favour with the Porte by obstructing them. I regard this as making me free to say whatever I please on the subject." On the same day he told the Austrian Ambassador what he thought of his chief, adding that it was impossible to work the Concert on these lines. He favoured concessions for railways in the Balkans, but not at the expense of Macedonian reform.

At the end of February a private member of the House of Commons moved a resolution regretting the failure of the reforms and urging the Government to press for the establishment of executive control by an authority responsible to the Powers. Grey's reply once more placed England at the head of the Concert.<sup>1</sup> The naval demonstration needed to secure the Financial Commission, he began, had exhausted the Con-

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches*, 77-90.

cert, and neither Lansdowne nor anyone else could have mobilized it again for a considerable time. But things had grown worse, and Austria's regrettable act created a new situation. Judicial reform, even if accepted by the Sultan, would not pacify the country or dissolve the bands. "If a Turkish Governor were appointed for a term of years, a man whose character and capacity were accepted and recognised by the Powers, and if he had a free hand and his position were secure, I believe that the whole Macedonian question might be solved. . . . I mean a Governor appointed with the consent of the Powers, irremovable without their consent, and secure in his appointment for a term of years." He might be a Mussulman, provided his character, position and powers were satisfactory. There would also have to be a large reduction of the Turkish troops, which the province could not afford, and some collective guarantee would have to be given by the Powers that such reduction should not invite invasion. If Macedonia continued to be neglected, there would be a catastrophe. The Concert must act or perish for lack of vitality.

This courageous utterance convinced even the most sceptical of Grey's critics that he was in earnest. But the situation had passed beyond control. Austria's request for a favour had killed the Concert. There was no need for the Sultan to yield, for collective pressure was unthinkable. Grey stood alone in his disinterested desire to alleviate the lot of the inhabitants. Achrenthal, smarting under his rebuke, was not likely to be helpful; Germany, warned by the Turcophil Marschall, disapproved the mildest coercion; even Russia, the traditional champion of the Balkan Christians, found the pace too hot. "I am aware that my proposals go further than all the Powers are likely to go yet", confessed Grey to Nicolson. "The Sultan would accept them if all the Powers, especially Germany, made it clear to them that they were in earnest. But the Powers will not face the Macedonian situation, and by always attempting a minimum instead of grasping the question boldly they will be landed in trouble some day." Perhaps Iswolsky, he added, might procure acceptance of a more modest scheme. But Iswolsky had other fish to fry.

The Tsar had expressed his wish for a visit from King Edward at the end of 1905, but he had to wait nearly three years for his guest. The Anglo-Russian Convention had to be made and the countries had to get used to the idea of co-operation. Anglophobia persisted in certain circles at St.



Petersburg, and British detestation of the Tsarist regime remained. In April 1908 it was intimated from St. Petersburg that a visit would be greatly appreciated. The King was anxious to go, and Grey strongly approved the plan. The announcement that the invitation had been accepted provoked a storm of protest from the Left wing of the Liberal party and from the Labour benches. For the first time Grey found himself fighting for his life.<sup>1</sup> The speech of June 4 formed a pendant to that of February 17. On the earlier date he had the congenial task of explaining the Anglo-Russian Convention : now he had to vindicate his policy of co-operation with a ruthless autocracy.

The King, he began, was acting on this occasion, as in all other affairs of state, on the advice of his Ministers ; and Sir Charles Hardinge, who would accompany him, would be bound by instructions. No negotiations were on foot for any new treaty or convention with the Russian Government, and none would be initiated during the visit. It would, however, have a political effect and was intended to do so, for it would emphasise the fact the two countries were at last on friendly terms. The Convention and the visit hung together. To boycott Russia owing to disapproval of her system of Government would be a disastrous mistake. He had always been for a fair and loyal understanding between the two countries, working together where their interests touched. "I stand by that, and if the House rejects it or makes it impossible I fall with it." The visit was long overdue and without marked discourtesy could no longer be postponed. It would be welcomed by the moderate and Liberal elements in Russia : it would be opposed only by the revolutionaries and the extreme reactionaries, both parties of violence.

The closing portion of the speech dealt with the internal affairs of Russia, which his critics had described in the darkest terms. While declining either to condemn or to excuse, he challenged some of the charges, and reminded his hearers that a good deal of disturbance was also caused by the revolutionary party : pogroms on the one side and assassinations on the other. But the system of government had been improving. The existence of the Duma was a great fact. "I see in Russia a great race, much of its power undeveloped still, its character still growing, not yet come to its full strength, but with new thoughts and new energies beginning to stir the race. I am

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches*, 91-104.

convinced it will have a great part in the world. Much of the peace of the world may depend, and much of the welfare both of Russia and ourselves must depend, upon the relations between us."

The atmosphere of the House was tense, for strong feeling had been aroused by revelations of a sinister regime. Grey spoke with unwonted animation, for grave issues were at stake. The Labour motion was rejected by a large majority, for the Unionists trooped into the Government lobby. Yet the voting gave no real indication of Liberal feeling. A few members, undeterred by the Foreign Secretary's threat of resignation, supported the protest; some abstained; others reluctantly obeyed the party whip. The argument that conditions in Russia were rapidly improving and that the Duma was an important factor failed to impress the radical wing. On February 28, in dealing with Macedonia, Grey had spoken like a Gladstonian. On June 4 he spoke as a *Realpolitiker*. He detested pogroms and executions as much as other Englishmen, but he could not sacrifice a new and valuable political friendship to such scruples. While his critics were thinking of Russian misrule, he had Germany in mind.

Five days later the King and Queen arrived at Reval.<sup>1</sup> While the rulers were enjoying each other's company, Hardinge and Iswolsky reviewed the situation. The latter defended his cautious attitude in Macedonia on the ground that he dare not go further than Germany approved, since Germany was the stronger Power and he had to be prudent. The British Government, replied Hardinge, desired to maintain the most friendly relations with Germany, but they could not sacrifice their legitimate interests or the claims of humanity to escape her ill-will. Moreover, owing to the unnecessarily large increase of her naval programme, a deep distrust of her intentions had been aroused. In seven or eight years a critical situation might arise in which Russia, if strong in Europe, might have much more influence in securing the peace of the world than at any Hague Conference. Thus it was absolutely necessary that England and Russia should have the same cordial and friendly relations as existed between England and France. There was an identity of interests, of which a solution of the Macedonian problem was not the least. The questions of Persia and the Balkan railways were also passed in review. The Tsar was even more cordial than his Minister.

<sup>1</sup> G. and T. V, ch. 37.

He warmly approved Grey's recent speech. He hoped to have the opportunity before long of making the acquaintance of the Foreign Secretary, who had largely contributed to the realisation of his dearest hope in achieving a real rapprochement. The visit, he declared, confirmed the intention and spirit of the Anglo-Russian Convention. There might be occasional disagreements in small matters, but the identity of national interests in Europe and Asia would far outweigh them. The idea of friendship had taken root among the people, and it only required fostering to bear fruit.

Grey's pledge that there should be no new agreements at Reval was faithfully observed. Yet the visit was scarcely less important than the King's memorable sojourn in Paris in 1903, and the Kaiser's outburst at Doeberitz showed that he sensed its significance. The outstanding feature was Hardinge's plea, in view of the growth of the German fleet, for the same cordial relations as already existed between England and France, and his pointed advice to Russia to increase her strength in Europe. Metternich was assured that nothing particular had happened,<sup>1</sup> but the foundations of a working partnership were laid. Henceforward, though sharp disagreements were to arise in Persia and elsewhere, the two Governments correlated their diplomacy in an ever increasing degree. The *Entente Cordiale* with France had widened into the Triple Entente, though Grey deprecated the use of such a term. We had turned two rivals and potential foes into friends. He never dreamed of the encirclement of Germany. His object was security, insurance, stabilisation. Yet the new orientation, like the old, was not without grave dangers. The principle of limited liability is difficult to apply in the relations of States. The greatest empire in the world wanted nothing that it did not possess. Yet we might easily be dragged into the quarrels of our new friends, neither of whom was satisfied with the *status quo*. The one coveted Alsace-Lorraine, the other the control of the Straits. It was also possible that the policy of the Central Powers might force us into closer relations with France and Russia than we had intended, and gradually transform the partnership into something not unlike an alliance.

On July 23, 1908, six weeks after the meeting at Reval, the Young Turks raised the banner of revolt in Macedonia and proclaimed the Constitution of 1876.<sup>2</sup> The Sultan yielded, the bands melted away, the foes of yesterday fraternised. After

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXV, 462.

<sup>2</sup> G. and T. V, ch. 38.

the failure to reform Turkey from without, she seemed about to reform herself. Among the statesmen of Europe none greeted the apparent miracle with such satisfaction as Grey. On May 26 he had complained to the Turkish Chargé that the state of Macedonia was worse than ever, and that he was helpless in the matter. At this moment, when the scheme for Judicial Reform was dead and his own ambitious scheme had found no support, the clouds suddenly lifted. While some old Gladstonians refused to believe that good could come out of Turkey, he expressed neither doubts nor fears.

The first step was to suggest to Russia the suspension of the efforts to extend the scope of the reforms. Russia concurred, the other Powers followed suit, and the Gendarmerie officers were recalled. A telegram of congratulation was sent to the Sultan and the Grand Vizier. Grey's thoughts were more fully expressed in private letters to his Ambassador. "We should avoid making the Turks suspicious by attempting to take a hand where we are not wanted, but we should make them understand that if they are really going to make a good job of their own affairs, our support and encouragement will be very firm, and that we shall deprecate any interference from outside on the part of others. . . . If Turkey really establishes a Constitution, and keeps it on its feet, and becomes strong herself, the consequences will reach further than any of us can foresee. The effect in Egypt will be tremendous and will make itself felt in India." A fortnight later he wrote that, while encouraging the new regime, "we must be careful not to give Russia the impression that we are reverting to the old policy of supporting Turkey as a barrier against her and should continue to work with Russia when possible". The Young Turks, he added on August 23, should not try to go too fast. The first thing was to get the machine into the hands of honest and capable men. Sound finance was the basis of good government. "We shall do all in our power to encourage them as long as they do well, and we shall not embarrass them by demands of our own."

Grey kept his word and our moral support was deeply appreciated. For the first time since Disraeli British influence at Constantinople was supreme. Russia had no desire to see a rejuvenated Turkey, and Germany had been too closely identified with Abdul Hamid to welcome the change. England seemed to have the ball at her feet. It was all too good to last. The Young Turks closed the era of foreign intervention,

but they cared as little for liberty as the Sultan himself. After the suppression of a counter-revolution in April 1909 and the deposition of Abdul Hamid, the Government degenerated into a military despotism. British influence declined and German influence revived. Grey had done his utmost to reform the old Turkey and to encourage the new, but his efforts were in vain. In Macedonia as in the Congo he laboured, not for selfish interests, but in the cause of humanity. In Africa his patient endeavours succeeded: in the Balkans they failed. But nobody can argue that failure was his fault.

## VI

The conclusion of the Algeiras Conference brought relief but not appeasement in Western Europe. Metternich's advice to Bülow was to let sleeping dogs lie. Grey desired to restore neighbourly relations with Berlin, but his attitude was extremely reserved.<sup>1</sup> When a party of German Burgomasters paid a visit to England in May 1906, he expressed his hope that it would not arouse suspicion or resentment in France.<sup>1</sup> The reception, he explained, was a mere act of courtesy. The French Foreign Minister might rest assured that the British Government would never make any political move in matters affecting French interests without informing Paris. Bourgeois replied that he perfectly understood and had not given the matter a second thought. Though Grey had thus no cause to worry about French sentiment, he deprecated Anglo-German fraternisations which might be misinterpreted both in Paris and Berlin. Taking a visit of German journalists in June as his text, Crowe wrote a homily on the unwisdom of running after Germany. "There is nothing more in what has been said about Germany lately in this country", commented Grey, "than a gratification of the desire to gush, which is very strong just now. And it is as difficult to restrain gushing as it is to restrain tears when people desire to cry." Grey was free from the almost neurotic Germanophobia of Crowe, but there was always a distinct chilliness in his references to Berlin. "The Germans do not realise that England has always drifted or deliberately gone into opposition to any Power which establishes a hegemony in Europe." The two countries were becoming afraid of one another. The first Dreadnought was

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* III, ch. 22.

launched in February 1906, and in April the German naval programme of 1900 was enlarged.

How uneasy were the relations between the three western capitals was revealed by a curious episode at the beginning of July. Metternich reported anxiety in Government circles as to French confidence in British friendship, and advised an attempt to allay it.<sup>1</sup> The German Ambassador in Paris was accordingly instructed to give the following verbal message to Bourgeois: "It was to be hoped that the *détente* between Germany and England, together with the unimpaired friendliness between France and England, would exert a favourable influence on the peace of the world. We are convinced that such a result would also be welcomed by the French Government." Bourgeois thanked Radolin for the friendly message, but made no reference to Anglo-German relations. He was surprised at such a formal communication, so Cambon informed Grey. As reported by the Ambassador, Radolin had spoken of an entente; but the note of the conversation made by Bourgeois and shown to Grey spoke of a rapprochement. Even this was an exaggeration, for the instructions to Radolin contained the word *détente*. It is difficult to understand why Cambon employed an expression the inaccuracy of which was established by the document he held in his hand.

Grey seized the occasion to explain the exact state of our relations with Berlin. He was surprised at the German communication. There was no entente, and nothing out of which it might be made. At the moment there was nothing to discuss between the two Governments except trifles. Relations were normal, and there was no need to say anything about them. It would be inconvenient for France if England were on bad terms with Germany, just as it would be inconvenient for England if Franco-German relations were bad; for, if we were called on to take sides, we should have to side with France as at Algeciras. Germany had been trying to force the pace with the visits of Burgomasters and editors. The tone of the Press in both countries had slightly improved, and that was the only sign of a rapprochement. Unofficial civilities implied no change of policy. Thus the well-meaning attempt to allay British suspicions initiated by the German Ambassador was frustrated.

A fortnight later, before the summer holidays, Grey discussed Anglo-German relations with Metternich.<sup>2</sup> France,

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXI, 437-40.

<sup>2</sup> G. and T. III, 363-4, and G.P. XXI, 441-8.

complained the latter, refused to admit that England could be good friends with Germany and herself at the same time. This was a great mistake. The fear that Germany might attack France was purely imaginary. France had made aggressive wars, Germany never. Grey replied that neither France nor England desired war with Germany. Till the end of the Algeiras Conference Franco-German friction had impaired cordial relations with Berlin, but relations were now normal. Some minor disputes had been settled, friendly visits had been paid, and the King was about to meet the Kaiser. That was a great deal in so short a time. What more could be expected? Delcassé, rejoined Metternich, had tried to form a ring against Germany. The Anglo-French entente remained, and now there was a desire for friendship with Russia. Germany did not see why she should not be inside the ring, instead of outside. If she were included, peace would be assured: if not, she would attempt to break through. Our dealings with Russia, retorted Grey, were quite simple: we desired security on the Indian frontier. That was not making a ring against Germany. If a question arose in which she was interested we should not try to settle without her. There were some warm friends of Germany in the Cabinet, reported Metternich to his chief, but Grey was not one of them. He too, desired good relations, but only if they did not interfere with his Franco-Russian arrangements.

After the storm in Morocco the sky seemed to be clearing at last. In August Edward VII paid a visit to his nephew at Cronberg which Hardinge described as an unqualified success. "As regards the political attitude of the Emperor and Tschirschky", concluded his report, "I was struck by his evident desire to be on friendly terms with us, and by the fact that they now seem at last to realise that friendly relations with us cannot be at the expense of our 'entente' with France, but that if they are to exist at all they must be co-existent with our 'entente.' I took every opportunity of rubbing this in." A fortnight later Haldane, who was busy reorganising the army, arrived in Berlin to study German methods and was cordially received. The Kaiser explained that he had no objection to the entente with France, and believed that it might even facilitate good relations between France and Germany. He desired trade, not territory. Haldane explained that there was no idea of forming an Anglo-Franco-Russian alliance against him. Bülow and Tschirschky were equally friendly,

but no attempt was made on either side to force the pace.

The French frowned on the Haldane visit, but the balance was redressed by the presence of a high British officer at their manœuvres. It was now Germany's turn to prick up her ears. It was obvious, wrote Hardinge in a minute on an article in the *Kölnische Zeitung* entitled *An Anglo-French Military Convention?*, that special facilities and favours granted to Sir John French would be interpreted as proofs of an alliance or a military convention. This was not the case, though discussions had taken place between the experts as to joint action in case of war. "The present elastic situation is more satisfactory for us, although the fact that we are not bound hand and foot to the French makes the latter nervous and suspicious." Hardinge's minute prompted Grey to a revealing comment. "There is much to be said on both sides. The difficulty of making an alliance with France now is that Germany might attack France at once, while Russia is helpless, fearing lest when Russia recovered she (Germany) should be crushed by a new Triple Alliance against her. She might make an alliance between us and France a pretext for doing this as her only chance of securing her future." Grey's unchanging principle was to stand by France so long as she did not commit aggression, and he believed an entente to be the best way of preserving her security.

When Clemenceau took office in November 1906 Cambon informed Grey that the new Government, and indeed all France, desired not only to maintain but to draw closer the cordial relations between the two countries. He thought that there was a party in England inclined to steer towards Germany. There were people, replied Grey, who thought it possible to be on equally good terms with both countries, but at the moment they were quiet, since there was no occasion for quarrel with Berlin. If a new issue arose like that of the Algeciras Conference, France might be sure that our support would be equally strong. Cambon remarked that Germany was now disposed to adopt a smoother tone towards France, and the French would be equally polite; but there was nothing of importance that required discussion. That was exactly our position, rejoined Grey. We were sometimes embarrassed by rather too many invitations to pay visits which it would be discourteous to refuse, but they had no political colour.

A fortnight later the new French Premier was denounced in the Senate for his "English policy". When he retorted that



it was impossible to answer so vague a charge, the Senator interrupted with a point blank question: "Is there a military convention between France and England? Yes or No?" He had only been in office for three weeks, replied the Premier, but he had not seen anything of the kind. He protested against such questions, since there might be occasions when a Government ought not to reply. Nothing should be said that might "décourager des amitiés" or "rompre des accords". The ambiguous phraseology had a mixed reception. Hardinge regretted that Clemenceau had not given a *démenti*, since no convention existed. Cambon argued that the myth was a deterrent to Germany. Grey's position differed from both. "It would have been difficult for M. Clemenceau to deny the existence of a convention without giving the impression that such a convention was not desired. I shall endeavour to avoid a public denial if I am asked a question." Unfortunately an element of mystery was inherent in the entente system.

1907 opened quietly, but France was less satisfied with the situation than ourselves.<sup>1</sup> Germany, observed Clemenceau to Campbell-Bannerman in Paris during the Easter holiday, seemed to be gradually assuming the attitude of France under Napoleon: everybody would be expected to give way to her pretensions. A moment might come when Europe would have to resist. He regretted the reductions in the British army at such a time. Public opinion, was the reply, would scarcely permit British troops to be employed on the Continent. Clemenceau, taken aback, confided his anxieties to Bertie. Could France only rely on naval support? He trusted that the Prime Minister had not weighed his words. Campbell-Bannerman gave Grey his own version of the conversation. He had explained the reluctance of the British people to undertake obligations committing them to a Continental war, but he never said that under no circumstances should we allow British troops to be employed. In reporting the correction to Paris Grey added: "Public opinion here would be very reluctant to go to war, but it would not place limits upon the use of our forces if we were engaged in war, and all our forces naval and military would then be used in the way in which they would be most effective." Clemenceau welcomed the assurance, though, like other Frenchmen, he wished for a binding pledge.

At this moment the French Government, fearing German

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* VI, ch. 42.

designs on the island possessions of Spain, suggested a treaty by which France, Spain and England would guarantee one another's possessions in the Mediterranean region.<sup>1</sup> After ascertaining the attitude of Madrid, Grey proposed to reach the goal by another route. He preferred an exchange of notes between England and Spain which would insure that no change took place behind our backs. Notes were accordingly exchanged on May 16, 1907. British policy, he declared, stood for the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Mediterranean and in that part of the Atlantic which washed the shores of Europe and Africa. If it were threatened the British Government would consult Spain. On the same day France and Spain exchanged similar notes, and identical written declarations by Grey and Cambon recorded that in case of need the three Governments should get into touch. There was no question of military or naval guarantees. Both parties were satisfied, Grey avoiding a tripartite treaty and France securing the promise of collaboration. In presenting the Anglo-Spanish notes to foreign Governments, our representatives were instructed to explain that the invention of submarines and the perfecting of offensive armaments made it necessary to assure the safety of Gibraltar. No one expected Germany to be pleased with an arrangement so obviously designed to hold her possible ambitions in check; but the transaction had been carried through in the least offensive way, and our interest in the Rock was generally recognised.

The sky in western Europe remained fairly clear throughout 1907. The second Peace Conference at the Hague, which sat from June to October, was a waste of time, energy and money, for the limitation of armaments was ruled out. King Edward's visit to the Kaiser at Wilhelmshöhe in August gave pleasure to both, and Bülow assured Hardinge that he had no desire to make difficulties in France or elsewhere. In the autumn the Kaiser returned the Kiel visit of 1904.<sup>2</sup> It ought to have taken place before, wrote Grey to Bertie, but the atmosphere had been unfavourable. Now it should be not only innocuous but salutary. Yet careful steering was needed. The rumour that Bülow might accompany his master was a shock, not merely because he was *persona ingrata* in England, but because its presence would transform the meeting into a political demonstration. Enemies of the entente would say that, now we had got all we wanted out of France, we intended to leave

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* VII, ch. 50.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T.* VI, 78-107.

her in the lurch and draw towards Germany to see what we could get in that quarter. "It is manifestly in the interests of Germany to make this view prevail", wrote Grey to Lascelles, "since by so doing she would alienate France from us and draw her closer to herself. . . . And just at this time, when the political situation is such as to make France not unnaturally nervous, I am particularly anxious that nothing should occur which would lend any colour to the idea that we are wavering by a hair's breadth from our loyalty to the entente and are contemplating a new departure. I cannot therefore too earnestly impress upon you the necessity of taking every possible opportunity of letting the Germans understand the necessity of preserving the entirely private character of this visit." That so cool a temperament could be thrown into a fever of anxiety by the prospect of Bülow accompanying his master reveals Grey's view of the fragility of the entente as late as 1907.

The Kaiser arrived at Windsor on November 11 in excellent health and spirits, and was warmly welcomed. The climax was reached in his speech at the Guildhall. Grey, records Schoen in his Memoirs, was obviously touched; and the two Foreign Ministers, shaking hands warmly, promised to do all in their power to act in the sense of his friendly words. The main political topic of the Windsor conversations was the Baghdad railway. Germany should do in Mesopotamia what we had done in Egypt, but she desired no further territory. Grey was prepared for the raising of the question, for he had communicated his views in a Memorandum to France and Russia.<sup>1</sup> He pointed out that the railway had a strategic as well as a commercial side, and that public opinion would be very suspicious if it were entirely under the control of a foreign Power. There was no ground for suspicion, replied the Kaiser. Germany sought no territory in Mesopotamia, and the Turks would not be able to use the railway against England. When the project was last discussed, rejoined Grey, it was the political rather than the commercial side which had been emphasised, and it might be so again. France and Russia, replied the Kaiser, had treated the matter as political, and Germany had invited English and French co-operation. The offer had been refused, and now, though English and French capital would be welcome, the Germans felt they must carry through the project themselves. Grey discussed the issue with Haldane, and their conclusions were recorded in a brief

<sup>1</sup>G. and T. VI, 355-6.

Memorandum. The commercial development of Mesopotamia should not be opposed. The quickest route to the East should not be exclusively controlled by a foreign company, which could endanger our commercial relations with India and might allow its use for strategic purposes hostile to British interests. We could only deal with the question *à quatre*, for France and Russia were also concerned.

It was now Haldane's turn to discuss the problem with William II, who declared that Germany would make no difficulties about the strategic question. Haldane reminded him that we were now such friends of France and Russia that the discussion must be *à quatre*, not *à deux*. The Kaiser replied that Russia was opposed to the whole project, and France would claim compensation in Morocco. The situation was eased when Schoen revealed that he had discussed the question with Iswolsky before he left St. Petersburg and that they were agreed. Schoen was despatched to London, where he explained that the railway would run close to the Persian frontier, and Germany could hardly forego the right to make an extension into Persia unless assured that it would be made by some one else. That, of course, was a question for Russia. He understood our desire to have a gate on the Gulf. When Grey remarked that our strategic interests could be safeguarded by a share in the general control, or by the control of one section of the line, Schoen objected that Germany could hardly part with a portion of her track. The conversation was friendly but inconclusive. Grey remarked that we should wait till we heard from the German Government, who would of course address France and Russia as well. We also should inform them of the position. Germany, replied Schoen, might have to wait till the discussion with Iswolsky had been carried further.

Cambon and Benckendorff were grateful that negotiations *à deux* had been declined. The situation, however, was less hopeful than it looked, for Grey felt sure that Bülow had not been consulted. He was nevertheless well satisfied with the visit, which he described as a great success. More than half the difficulties of diplomacy, he declared in his first speech after its conclusion, disappeared when the nations realised that neither intended ill to the other. "The Emperor was genuinely pleased with his reception", he wrote to Bertie, but there was no attempt either on his part or on Schoen's to force the pace or to do anything inconvenient. "In fact the result

has been to mollify Anglo-German relations—at any rate for the time—without in the least weakening our relations with France as far as this side is concerned.” “One impression he appears to have left in the mind of everybody”, reported Lord Morley to the Viceroy of India, “namely that he does really desire and intend peace.”<sup>1</sup> The trouble was that for Anglo-German relations to become and remain really friendly, Franco-German relations needed to be improved; and this was a task beyond the wit of man.

A few days after the discussion with Schoen at the Foreign Office, the German Ambassador spoke to Grey about the Baghdad railway.<sup>2</sup> The interests of England, France and Russia were so different that a Conference of the four Powers would be difficult, and Germany might find herself opposed by the rest. It might, therefore, be best for her to address the three Governments separately. He had not suggested a formal Conference, explained Grey, though a meeting of business men representing the four Powers might deal with such matters as through rates. The political aspect of the question might be settled before they met. France and Russia could not formulate their views before they were approached, and methods of safeguarding British strategic interests would have to be examined by experts. The outlook seemed promising, but it was a false dawn. The discussions between Germany and Russia led to no result, and Bülow vetoed negotiations *à quatre*. On June 25, 1908, the Foreign Office was informed that the German Government had renounced the idea of summoning a conference, but would always be ready to discuss the question of a terminus on the Persian Gulf.<sup>3</sup> Since the Kaiser and Schoen had been informed that we could only negotiate in co-operation with France and Russia, this communication closed the door.

The failure of the Baghdad railway negotiations left a twinge of annoyance in Downing Street, for the initiative had come from the German side and the Kaiser had accepted discussions *à quatre*. Nothing was known to the public, but early in 1908 a more sensational secret was revealed. Without informing his Chancellor, William II wrote a private letter to Tweedmouth, First Lord of the Admiralty, who described it as an astounding communication.<sup>4</sup> Grey took it calmly, and

<sup>1</sup> Morley, *Recollections*, II, 237-9.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T.* VI, 795-6.

<sup>3</sup> *G. and T.* VI, 368-70.

<sup>4</sup> *G. and T.* VI, 132-141, and *G.P.* XXIV, ch. 175.

approved the suggestion to send the Kaiser a copy of the forthcoming statement on the naval estimates. When, however, the incident was revealed by the Military Correspondent of *The Times*, a tactless but well-meaning endeavour to improve Anglo-German relations was transformed by suspicious newspapers into an insidious attempt to weaken our defences. Since the letters were private, it was decided to keep them secret. But suspicions thrive on secrecy, and the mysterious communication added fuel to the flame. "What the Emperor and Metternich seem unwilling to admit", wrote Grey to Lascelles, "is that innocent intentions to-day are no guarantee to us against other contingencies a few years hence."

The excitement generated by the Kaiser's escapade was only a symptom of the growing tension, and President Fallières, on his official visit in May, was received with unusual warmth. A new German Navy Bill in April decided the British Government to raise the naval question officially during the King's visit to his nephew on his way to Marienbad, and a Memorandum, dated July 31, 1908, was drawn up for his guidance.<sup>1</sup> Metternich had been talking about the lack of good feeling between England and Germany.<sup>2</sup> It had been pointed out to him informally that the best way to improve feeling would be to avert an increase of naval expenditure, which would have to be explained to Parliament. "We have to take into account not only the German navy but also the German army. If the German fleet ever becomes superior to ours, the German army can conquer this country. There is no corresponding risk of this kind to Germany: for however superior our fleet was, no naval victory would bring us any nearer Berlin." There need be no formal agreement. "If it could be shown that, as a result of the interview between the two sovereigns, a slackening of activity in the building programmes of the two navies had ensued, there is no doubt that the state of unrest prevailing in Europe due to apprehensions in England and Germany would be greatly appeased, and this would be of more value to the peace of the world than any Entente based on the settlement of territorial or commercial questions. Were such a happy result to be attained, the King and the Emperor would be rightly hailed together as the Peacemakers of Europe."

A second Memorandum, drafted a week later, discussed the problem from a wider standpoint.<sup>3</sup> There was nothing in the

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* VI, 779.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T.* VI, 173-4.

*G.P.* XXIV, 81-104.

relations of the two Governments to cause anxiety, for since Algeciras there had been no diplomatic difficulties. Nor was there any deep-rooted dislike between the peoples, as was proved by the popularity of the Emperor's visit and other evidence. The trouble arose from a certain anxiety as to the years ahead. Should naval expenditure increase, apprehension would grow: if expenditure slackened, apprehension would at once diminish. The British Government would not think of questioning the right of Germany to build as large a navy as she thought necessary for her own purposes, nor would they complain of it. "But they have to face the fact that at the present rate of construction the German naval programme will in a very few years place the German navy in a position of superiority to the British as regards the most powerful type of battleship. This will necessitate a new British programme of construction to be begun next year. . . . Rightly or wrongly a great part of the world has come of late years to concentrate attention upon the relations between England and Germany, to look in them for the chief indication of whether the peace of the world is likely to be disturbed, and to estimate this by their rivalry in naval expenditure." It was not desired to force discussion of the question even in private, if this was deprecated by the Emperor; but it was too important not to be mentioned when the prospect of a visit of the King to Berlin was likely to be raised.

These impressive documents mark a turning-point in the history of British diplomacy. During his first two years of office Grey's main anxiety arose from the strained relations between Paris and Berlin. From 1908 onwards the storm centre shifted from the eastern frontier of France to the North Sea. The rapid growth of the German fleet had now become the leading topic of political conversation in Europe. If a halt in the race were to be called, the initiative had obviously to come from the British side, for the Germans had a long term programme. The decisive conversation at Cronberg on August 11 took place between Hardinge and the Kaiser.<sup>1</sup> The former developed the arguments set forth in the memoranda, but he found the door bolted and barred. Modification of the programme, declared the host sharply, was impossible, and discussion of a question involving national honour could not be allowed. The German reply, in Hardinge's opinion, offered a complete justification for any counter-measures

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* VI, 183-190, and *G.P.* XXIV, 125-131.

which the Government might adopt. Never again was the question of limitation officially raised from the British side. It seemed indeed as if there was nothing to be done except to increase our navy, while drawing ever closer to France and Russia. Lord Roberts even demanded a conscript army, but met with no support from the Government.

Six weeks after the Cronberg interview the arrest by the French authorities at Casablanca of deserters from the Foreign Legion restored Morocco to the centre of the stage.<sup>1</sup> Germany had lost the first round at Algeciras, but the fight was not over. The co-operation of German Consular officials in the attempted embarkation of some of the deserters on a German vessel opened up alarming possibilities. Though neither country desired to fight, questions of national dignity were involved. It was clearly a case of arbitration, which Germany proposed on October 14 and France accepted. The German Government however proceeded to demand the immediate release of the German deserters and an apology for the violence to German officials. France refused an apology, and a fortnight later the two German demands were formally renewed in writing. Pichon replied that every aspect of the incident would be considered.

"I do not like the way in which the Germans have revived the Casablanca incident with France," wrote Grey to the First Lord of the Admiralty on November 5. "A fortnight ago Bülow himself said it was practically settled. It certainly will not be for us to make any preparations or movements of ships which are noticeable. That might precipitate a general quarrel between Germany and France which might otherwise not occur; for any hostile movement on our part would be construed as an unjustifiable menace at this stage and would influence German opinion. But I think the Admiralty should keep in readiness to make preparations in case Germany sent France an ultimatum and the Cabinet decided that we must assist France." Hearing that Iswolsky was greatly disturbed, Grey telegraphed his opinion that the question would be peacefully settled. "But I cannot divine the German motive in reviving the Casablanca incident: the advantage of playing with such a question in public for Parliamentary purposes seems too disproportionate to the risk involved. I cannot therefore but feel some degree of discomfort." If the situation became acute, Russia and Italy should join in a strong

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. VII*, 52-74.



appeal to Germany and France to refer the matter to the Hague or an impartial mediator. The crisis ended on November 10, when the two Governments expressed regret for the events at Casablanca and referred the whole matter to arbitration. A tactful award by the arbitrators at the Hague in May 1909 concluded an incident which increased both the European unrest and Grey's chronic suspicion of Berlin. While Lascelles believed that co-operation and compromise were still possible and desirable, Hardinge, Nicolson and Crowe felt and argued that the growing naval power of Germany and her rough diplomatic methods constituted a danger which could only be met by intimate relations with France and Russia. Grey's own position was midway between the two schools. His watchword was friendship with France, not hostility to any other power.

## VII

The Young Turk revolution closed the chapter of Macedonian reform and opened another of a graver kind. That Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria would sooner or later proclaim his independence and assume the title of King was generally expected; but the simultaneous annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Francis Joseph in October 1908 was a complete surprise in the West. King Edward had been told nothing on his visit to the Emperor at Ischl in August and he resented the discourtesy. The Treaty of Berlin was the juridical foundation of Near Eastern politics, and a breach of its articles was a challenge to the stability of Europe.<sup>1</sup> Here was a new alarm, not from Germany this time but from her ally. In a series of telegrams despatched on October 5 Grey outlined the policy which he was to pursue throughout the winter. He informed the Turkish Ambassador that we should tell Vienna and Sofia that we could not admit a unilateral right to alter a treaty. We should therefore refuse to recognise what had been done till the views of other Powers, especially Turkey, were known. Turkey had been hardly treated. Asked whether she should go to war, he replied that war would not assist. The independence of Bulgaria and the annexation of Bosnia were no material loss, damaging though they were to her prestige. If she asked for compensation we

<sup>1</sup> G. and T. V, chs. 40 and 41. Bernadotte E. Schmitt, *The Annexation of Bosnia*, is the best account of the crisis; Nintchitch, *La Crise Bosniaque*, 2 vols. gives the Servian version.

should support her claim. To France and Russia he expressed the hope that they would adopt a friendly attitude to Turkey.

The most important message flashed over the wires on this crowded day was the sharp British reply to the announcement of the annexation. "You should remind his Excellency of the protocol of January 17, 1871, attached to the Treaty of London, to which Austria-Hungary is a party, in which it was laid down that no Power can break its treaty engagements or modify their stipulations except by friendly agreement and with the assent of the contracting parties. His Majesty's Government could not approve of an open violation of the Treaty of Berlin, nor recognise an alteration of it when the other Powers and in this case especially Turkey have not been consulted. You should make representations in this sense to the Austrian Government and urge strongly upon them the necessity of re-considering their decision to annex the two occupied provinces." Most inopportune and unfortunate! he complained to Mensdorff; it was an affront to Turkey. A private telegram authorised Goschen to convey unofficially to Aehrenthal our resentment at being treated with such bad faith, when he had just expressed to the British Ambassador his disbelief in the rumours of Bulgaria's imminent declaration of independence. The Bulgarian Government was informed that we could not approve or recognise its action till the views of other Powers, especially Turkey, had been ascertained. To the Servian Minister, who complained that the annexation would be regarded as a national calamity and might provoke a conflict in the Balkans, Grey replied that the disturbance of the *status quo* was ill-timed, but that he could merely take note of the Serb point of view. To Metternich he spoke of the danger to the whole Treaty of Berlin and denounced Austria's unilateral action. When Dilke complained in the House of Commons that he was making too much fuss about the formal incorporation of provinces which for all practical purposes had belonged to the Hapsburg Empire for a generation he retorted that the principle of the sacredness of public law was at stake.

The instinctive reaction to a diplomatic shock is the proposal of a Conference. Asked by the Turkish Ambassador whether it was possible, Grey replied that the subjects of discussion would have to be defined. Turkey should be ready with a plan to meet her claims. Financial compensation from the two treaty-breaking states seemed the best course, for money was her chief need. The prospects were not improved

by Mensdorff's intimation that his Government would not agree to the question of Bosnia being discussed. Metternich stated that the German Government desired to localise the trouble in the Near East and to support the Young Turk regime, though she also felt bound to stand by her ally. She would gladly support an indemnity to Turkey. It was a consolation to Grey that Berlin shared his desire to keep the peace and to save the face of the Young Turks. He remarked to Metternich that co-operation in a given question produced more effect than the exchange of assurances which were soon forgotten.<sup>1</sup>

The question of a conference entered a new phase when Iswolsky arrived in London with a draft programme. Whereas Achrenthal desired to exclude the annexation, the Russian statesman proposed to range over a vast field. His nine points included not only Bulgaria, Bosnia and the Sanjak, but such far-reaching issues as the application of the reforms promised by the Treaty of Berlin both in European Turkey and the Armenian provinces, the removal of the fetters imposed on Montenegro, territorial concessions to Servia and Montenegro at the expense of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Danubian rights of the Balkan states, and the Capitulations in Turkey.

Iswolsky desired a Conference in Rome. Should Russia, France and England issue a joint invitation? The opinion of Germany should be sought, replied Grey, and the Powers should not be divided into two camps before the Conference began. Iswolsky then turned to the topic which had inspired his visit to the West. What did Grey feel about the Straits? It was very inopportune to raise the question, replied the Foreign Secretary. A one-sided arrangement would be unacceptable. Russia's action in Persia had made her very unpopular, and for her to seek advantages from the present crisis would create a very bad impression. The disappointed visitor hinted at the unfortunate consequences of a veto, and asked if he was to telegraph it to St. Petersburg. Grey's considered reply was given in a Memorandum dated October 14. The opening of the Straits was fair and reasonable. If open on equal terms to all no objection could be made, but Russia desired special rights for herself and the other Black Sea Powers. British opinion greatly resented Austria's action, and would be greatly disappointed if Russia used the occasion to secure an advantage for herself. If, however, she co-opera-

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXVI, 440-2.

ted with England on disinterested lines, opinion would become favourable to a change in the Straits. Any proposal would need the preliminary consent of Turkey.

On the following day Grey wrote a private letter to Iswolsky gilding the pill. Though he had emphasised the difficulties of immediate action, he had no desire to keep the Straits closed. "On the contrary, I positively desire to see an arrangement made which will open the Straits on terms which would be acceptable to Russia and to the riverain states of the Black Sea, while not placing Turkey or outside Powers at an unfair disadvantage. Some such arrangement seems to me essential to the permanent establishment of good relations between Russia and ourselves." A post-dated cheque is sometimes better than nothing, but these friendly words could not conceal the fact that Iswolsky's mission had failed. The Foreign Secretary had a difficult part to play and he had not flinched. Standing as he did for the public law of Europe and fair treatment for the Young Turks, he resisted not only the breaches of the Treaty of Berlin by Austria and Bulgaria but the attempt of Russia to score a point for herself.

After thus defining his position Grey had no ambition for a leading rôle. He believed that any arrangement between Austria and Turkey satisfactory to the latter would be recognised by the Powers. "I am not at all wedded to a Conference about the Near East", he wrote to Nicolson, "if any other solution is easier later on and acceptable to France and Russia. But even if Bulgaria and Austria make arrangements which satisfy Turkey, they must somehow be countersigned by the Powers in so far as they alter the Treaty of Berlin." When the dust of the explosion began to settle it appeared that the most dangerous factor was the resentment of Belgrade. "I have not myself much sympathy with the clamour of Servia and Montenegro for territorial compensation", he confided to Nicolson. "But I do not want to cold-shoulder Iswolsky on the Servian question if the Russians are keen about it, and I will do my best to support him." Milovanovich, the Servian Foreign Minister, who pleaded the cause of his country on a round of visits, was reminded of the difficulty of inducing Austria to cede territory. We would support Russia in her championship of Servian claims, but we could not push matters to the point of war. The Austrian Government was informed that we had strongly urged prudence at Belgrade and the avoidance of all provocation.

Throughout the autumn and winter a conflagration was never far away. On November 10 Benckendorff remarked that he was going to be very indiscreet. What would England do if a crisis arose in the Balkans and Germany supported her Austrian ally? It was no good saying anything, replied Grey, unless he was authorised by the Cabinet, and it was impossible to seek a decision in advance. The French had not asked any questions about the Casablanca incident, which had now been settled. So much depended upon how the quarrel came. British sympathy would naturally be against the aggressor in any war. Meanwhile he told Mensdorff that the movements of Austrian troops were alarming not only Servia but ourselves. If Austria could reach a settlement with Turkey, Servia and Montenegro, we would recognise it. When Mensdorff complained that it would be impossible to satisfy the two Slav states, Grey gently reminded him that it was very much easier to disturb the *status quo* than to restore equilibrium. Yet he never encouraged them to hold out for unreasonable terms. Turkey, he felt, was entitled to financial compensation from Austria and Bulgaria. The championship of Serb and Montenegrin claims was Russia's business rather than ours. England's policy, wrote Mensdorff to his chief, was to consider the Young Turk regime and to uphold the principle of the inviolability of international treaties. The Government was not working for war.<sup>1</sup>

While Anglo-Austrian relations were inflamed by our condemnation of Aehrenthal's *coup* and by sharp press attacks in both countries, Anglo-German contacts were scarcely affected by the earlier phases of the crisis. Grey realised that Austria had acted on her own initiative, and that Germany had to stand by her ally. The balance of power was preserved by the present grouping, he observed to Mensdorff, and he would not think of disturbing it. Yet he was far from happy. The Cronberg interview was followed by the Casablanca crisis, and the latter by the *Daily Telegraph* incident.<sup>2</sup> Though the Kaiser's good intentions were recognised, his blazing indiscretions increased the anxieties of Europe. Grey avoided public reference to the matter, and to Metternich he spoke in an informal and friendly way. But his rather sombre reflections were embodied in private letters to Bertie. "I am not confident about the future. We can and ought to go to the length of giving Germany no excuse for saying that she is being cold-

<sup>1</sup> A.I. 549-50, December 5.

<sup>2</sup> G. and T. VI, 201-226.

shouldered, isolated or squeezed ; but when she has recovered from the effect of the Emperor's vagaries, she will resume not only her self-respect but the tendency to resent anything being done without her leave, or any friendship between other countries in which she is not included. Then there will be trouble. She has reached that dangerous point of strength which makes her itch to dominate."

When the excitement was over he wrote to Bertie again in equally gloomy terms. "Everyone here is on their guard. . . . All pro-Germans here have been shaken or shocked by the impulsive indiscretion of the Emperor. They doubt his sanity, and as for the German people they have been stirred into a greater sense of responsibility and are taking the Emperor in hand for themselves. I should like Germany and its Emperor to cease to be talked about, to see them allowed to settle down, and to let the King pay his contemplated visit to Berlin next season, which would have a tranquillising effect. I do not believe the German people want war, and if left to themselves I think they will settle down and the Emperor will never regain his position. But if they are continually stirred up and talked about, they will be goaded to great irritation. . . . Never since I have been in office has opinion here been so thoroughly wide awake with regard to Germany and on its guard as it is now. I have not the faintest tremor of anxiety about that." Thus the net result of the *Daily Telegraph* incident was to strengthen Grey's suspicions of Berlin. It is curious that at this moment Benckendorff confided to Iswolsky his fears that an Anglo-German rapprochement was by no means impossible.<sup>1</sup>

The opening of 1909 witnessed a slight *détente*. Grey looked forward to the King's visit without enthusiasm, and explained to Bertie, for the benefit of Clemenceau, how little it meant.<sup>2</sup> "If the visit had not taken place, it would have been a cause of offence and made all politics more difficult. For this reason I am glad it is arranged, but otherwise I do not expect much good from it. To please the Emperor does not carry so much weight in Germany as it did. Feeling here is very strong that a Minister should go with the King. If I went it would be liable to misconstruction, as I have not been on any other visits ; and there is no reason as far as politics are concerned why I should go. I want things to go smoothly between us and Germany. I do not want any official co-

<sup>1</sup> Benckendorff, I, 20-25.

<sup>2</sup> G. and T. VI, 227-237.

operation which would alter the present grouping of the Powers. It is therefore being arranged that Crewe should go with the King." Grey's argument that there was no political reason for his going suggests a certain lack of imagination. Personal contacts cannot work miracles; but it is regrettable that he never met and never desired to meet the Ministers entrusted with the shaping of German policy. Goschen reported that the visit was a splendid success. The good effect was increased by the simultaneous signature of a Franco-German agreement relating to Morocco.<sup>1</sup> Grey remarked to the German Chargé that, if he had been asked to name what he most desired in foreign affairs, one of the things would have been that the difficulties between Germany and France should be removed. Our only interest in Morocco was to preserve equal opportunities for commerce. If these were safeguarded the political effect of the agreement would be excellent.

The *détente* was of brief duration, for the Cabinet was alarmed about the navy and the Bosnian crisis was nearing its peak. Grey welcomed Turkey's settlements with Austria and Bulgaria, but the most intractable issue remained. He had never feared that a war would result from the infringements of Turkey's treaty rights, and he had therefore confined himself to urging a financial *solatium*. The demands of Servia, on the other hand, though lacking treaty justification, threatened a general conflict and compelled him to take an active part. Tension had increased throughout the winter, and there were rumours that Austria might attack her troublesome little neighbour in the spring. On February 19, 1909, he despatched a telegram to Vienna which had been submitted for approval to the French, German and Italian Governments. "We are very seriously disturbed by report that Austria feels she may be compelled to take active measures against Servia in the near future, and is already contemplating them. We doubt whether any assurances could induce Russia to regard such a situation with equanimity, and the consequences of war between Servia and Austria might therefore be so far-reaching as to disturb the peace of Europe and involve other Powers. . . . To secure peace it seems undesirable to delay any longer discussion among the Powers of what settlement can be arrived at with regard to Servian and Montenegrin interests. To initiate this discussion we would suggest that Austria should state confidentially to us what concessions she is prepared to make, for

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* VII, 131-46.

we have always understood that she is prepared to make concessions about Article 29 of the Treaty of Berlin and to offer some other advantage in addition." The attempt to avert a crisis by the friendly intervention of the less interested Powers was frustrated by Germany, who, knowing that such a course would be resented by Aehrenthal, replied that representations should first be made at Belgrade.

Grey's disappointment was assuaged by the welcome news a few days later that Iswolsky had advised Serbia to drop her claim for territorial compensations and to entrust her case to the Powers. "I realise how difficult it is for Iswolsky to say this at Belgrade", he wired, "but I am sure it is the only means of preserving peace. You can assure him that we will do all we can to support concessions, such as economic, which can be obtained by peaceful means." "I feel strongly", he telegraphed to Nicolson, "that, Russia having done her part for peace, Austria should respond by being equally conciliatory. . . . It appears therefore that if Serbia renounces territorial claims, Austria should now be prepared to come to a preliminary accord with the Powers as to what these economic advantages should be." In assuming that Serbia would tamely follow the Russian lead Grey was mistaken, for public opinion prevented a declaration likely to satisfy Aehrenthal. Moreover Aehrenthal refused to discuss economic concessions till she promised to be a good neighbour. Grey confessed to Mensdorff that he was almost in despair. Serbia's first draft of a declaration to Austria met with no approval in Vienna or elsewhere. The Bosnian crisis was now narrowed down to a single issue: Could Serbia be persuaded to yield before Austria's patience gave way? It was a race against time.

Germany's "diplomatic ultimatum" of March 22, as Iswolsky described it, broke Russia's resistance; for the penalty of refusal was an Austrian attack on Serbia, which he dreaded above everything. Nicolson wrote angrily about surrender, and foretold the decay and possibly the death of the Anglo-Russian entente. Grey was less pessimistic. If he saw no need for an alliance with France, still less did he desire such a partnership with Russia. In any case the question was academic. "I do not think it is practicable to change our agreements into alliances. The feeling here about definite commitment to a Continental war on unforeseeable conditions would be too dubious to permit us to make an alliance. Russia too must make her internal Government less reactionary.



Till she does, Liberal sentiment here will remain very cool, and even those who are not sentimental will not believe that Russia can purge her administration sufficiently to become a strong and reliable Power. Meanwhile let us keep an entente with Russia in the sense of keeping in touch so that our diplomatic action may be in accord and in mutual support." Grey knew the House of Commons and Nicolson did not.

Iswolsky's collapse strengthened rather than weakened the British resolve to stand out for an agreed liquidation of the Austro-Serb dispute. When invited to furnish the same unconditional assent to the annexation of Bosnia, Grey handed the German Ambassador a written reply. "His Majesty's Government are not disposed to give the assurance required until the Servian question has been settled on lines satisfactory to them and the other Powers; and until a solution has been assured of other questions arising from the annexation of Bosnia, especially the alteration of Article 29. When this result has been obtained His Majesty's Government will be ready to agree to any peaceful settlement based on mutual goodwill among the Powers." It was a very grave decision and imperilled peace, commented Metternich. That statement, retorted Grey, could only mean that Austria intended to attack Servia, or to dictate terms to her if we did not do as she wished. The British Government would never consent to act under pressure of that kind. His courage was rewarded, for Austria consented to a Servian declaration which he had helped to formulate. He had established his contention that it was the right and duty of the Powers to mediate in a dispute which threatened the general peace. On April 1 Mensdorff announced that the differences between Austria and Servia were at an end, and the Italian Chargé informed him that Austria and Italy had agreed about Montenegro. There was no longer any reason to withhold our consent to the annexation. Aehrenthal had won. In expressing his satisfaction to Mensdorff Grey reiterated that his chief concern had been the preservation of peace. What little a British statesman could do in a matter for which he was not prepared to fight he had done.

## VIII

During the gloomy Bosnian winter the German fleet demanded Grey's attention scarcely less than the drama in the Near East. On December 18, 1908, in conversation with

Metternich he referred to Bülow's statement that we had made no proposals about naval expenditure.<sup>1</sup> The matter had been discussed in Downing Street and at Cronberg; but of course we had made no actual proposal, since we were always told that German expenditure was fixed by law. That was so, replied the Ambassador. The programme would not be increased, and perhaps the laying down of a battleship in a certain year might be postponed. Grey intimated that we should have to build more Dreadnoughts, as otherwise the Germans would soon have a majority; but we should explain that our shipbuilding depended on the pace with which the German programme was carried out. Parliament might authorise the laying down of some vessels in the spring, the summer and the autumn. If Germany laid down fewer ships than was anticipated, we should not proceed with some of our own.

On January 4, 1909, Grey came to grips with the Ambassador.<sup>2</sup> If shipbuilding continued at the normal rate, Germany would have thirteen Dreadnoughts by February 1912. If materials were collected in advance for the next four, as had been done in the case of four ships already, she would have seventeen. If her whole shipbuilding capacity were used she might have twenty-one by April, 1912. These were formidable figures. Cruisers, not Dreadnoughts, were needed for the protection of commerce. We should not contest Germany's right to build as many as she pleased, and she must not take it amiss if we built what we thought necessary. If we found she was not building as fast as we anticipated, we should slow down. The Ambassador replied that the German programme was fixed by law and that the estimate of Dreadnoughts was excessive. Grey rejoined that, unless we took precautions, there might be a period of six months during which Germany would have a majority. The most important feature of the conversation was Grey's statement that materials had been collected in advance for four capital ships. Henceforth rumours of acceleration were in the air.

A month later, on February 3, Metternich announced that he had inquired into the statement that in the case of four ships materials had been collected in advance, and found it to be true. They had been collected because it was known that the ships would be built. In the case of subsequent ships not yet allocated, materials would not be assembled in advance unless the firms cared to do so at their own risk. Construction would

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. VI*, 172-3.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T. VI*, 237-82.

not be accelerated. The rate of expenditure was fixed by law, but he admitted that the Reichstag might vote an increase if it liked. Grey repeated that, if German shipbuilding was slower than we feared, we should not build up to our estimates. When Metternich argued that German shipbuilding in no way competed with ours, and that no one in Germany thought of invading England, Grey replied that the man in the street could not help feeling alarmed. It seemed to him that, with twenty-one of the most powerful aggressive vessels in the world concentrated at Wilhelmshaven, there was a risk of invasion should there be any unfavourable turn in Anglo-German relations. Invasion for us meant conquest. It was quite impossible for us to avoid such apprehension, just as it would be impossible to avoid a scare in Germany if one of her land neighbours were to collect an army more powerful than her own. In neither conversation did Grey renew the invitation so sharply rebuffed at Cronberg, but every word breathed the conviction that trustful relations were impossible in the face of the rapidly growing German fleet.

In the next conversation, on March 5, Metternich again explained the acceleration, and reiterated that it would not recur. Grey thereupon proposed that the Governments should allow their Naval Attachés to see, not the designs, but the number of the ships which were being built and the stages they had reached. The suggestion was not pressed, as the Ambassador replied that he had not started the conversation with the intention of proposing an arrangement. Five days later Grey outlined the explanation, based on their conversations, which the Government proposed to make in presenting the naval estimates. The Ambassador corrected one item in the account. Germany, he declared, would not have thirteen Dreadnoughts till the end of 1912, and he repeated that she would not accelerate her programme. Grey was by no means reassured. The vessels, he replied, might be built faster than the German Government expected. Thirteen, he understood, were now under construction or in preparation. Metternich challenged the statement. If materials were being collected in advance for the four ships to be laid down in 1909, it must be at the contractors' risk. Unless the Naval Attachés were allowed to visit the yards, interjected Grey, the Admiralty could never be quite sure when the vessels ordered at any particular time would be ready. In the absence of an arrangement we must have a margin on our side.

The speeches of the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Prime Minister on the Naval Estimates on March 16 provoked something like a panic. Even more alarming than the prospective dimensions of the German fleet were the refusal to discuss limitation and the spectre of stealthy acceleration. Till this moment the *Flottenpolitik* had been an anxiety : henceforth it was a nightmare. Though the arithmetical forecast of the Government proved incorrect, the gravity of the challenge was indisputable. At the election of January 1906 nobody had talked about the German fleet. At the election of January 1910 no theme except the Lloyd George Budget was so frequently discussed. The deepening suspicion of Germany's aims could no longer be allayed by fair words. The Liberal Government had slowed down the shipbuilding programme of its predecessor till it approached, or, as the Opposition argued, passed the limit of safety. That chapter was now closed. The second Hague Conference had contemptuously dismissed the reduction or limitation of armaments. Nothing, it seemed, could check the race. Rejecting as it did the demand of Lord Roberts and a section of the Unionist party for compulsory service, the Cabinet determined at all costs to maintain our supremacy at sea. On March 16, 1909, the signal was hoisted : Full steam ahead !

On the following day Metternich complained that no notice had been taken of his assurance that Germany would not have thirteen Dreadnoughts till the end of 1912. The First Lord of the Admiralty, replied Grey, had been astonished at the statement, as more ships had actually been seen. The two versions could only be reconciled if the large armoured cruisers under construction were excluded. The only way to prevent such misunderstanding was for the Naval Attachés to visit the yards. The Navy was a matter of life and death to us in a sense which could never apply to Germany, and we must keep on the safe side. On the following day, in circulating the record of his conversations, Grey minuted that the German estimate included cruisers as well as battleships, and that the two versions therefore remained unreconciled.

Next day it was Grey's turn to complain. The reported statement of Tirpitz suggested that the German Government was prepared to discuss naval expenditure and that we had held back. The misunderstanding could be removed by publishing the report of their conversations. The Ambassador deprecated publication on the ground that they had been

informal and that the records were not correct in every detail. He then confidentially communicated further details. In the case of two of the ships for the financial year 1909-10, tenders would not be called for till the autumn. With regard to the two other ships of the year the German Government, in order to prevent the formation of a ring and the raising of prices, promised contracts in advance to two firms. According to the Admiralty, replied Grey, that was exactly what had happened with regard to all four ships. He would ask the Admiralty for a statement of the facts on which its calculations were based so that the matter could be cleared up. Would the German Government make or authorise a declaration of its views on a discussion of naval expenditure? A day or two later Schoen, the Foreign Minister, declared that the British Government had in a general manner announced its readiness for an understanding on the naval programmes, but had made no formal proposal. There was therefore nothing to which the German Government had to reply. The programme was fixed by law, and it threatened no other nation.

Since the Prime Minister and the First Lord of the Admiralty had spoken on March 16 the German danger had been the one topic of conversation, and a declaration from the Foreign Secretary was anxiously awaited. His statement was made on March 29 in reply to the charge that the provision of battle-ships did not guarantee the safety of the Empire.<sup>1</sup> After defending the elastic proposals of the Government against the demand for the immediate construction of eight capital ships he admitted that, whether the German programme was carried out quickly or slowly, its existence created a grave situation. "When that programme is completed Germany, a great country close to our shore, will have a fleet of thirty-three Dreadnoughts. That fleet would be the most powerful which the world has ever seen. . . . That imposes upon us the necessity, of which we are now at the beginning—except so far as we have Dreadnoughts already—of rebuilding the whole of our fleet. That is what the situation is. What we do not know is the time in which we shall have to do it."

Passing from shipbuilding to diplomacy, Grey reviewed Anglo-German relations during his term of office. The recent Franco-German agreement on Morocco had removed the chief cause of friction. "And now as regards our future diplomatic relations with Germany, I see a wide space in which

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches*, 123-44.

both of us may walk in peace and amity. Two things, in my opinion, would produce conflict. One is an attempt by us to isolate Germany. . . . Another which would certainly produce a conflict would be the isolation of England, attempted by any great Continental Power so as to dominate and dictate the policy of the Continent." Neither of these was likely to occur. The only trouble was the naval rivalry. Public opinion increasingly measured the probable relations between the two countries by their naval expenditure. Nothing would so much reassure the world with regard to the prospects of peace as that it should be diminished. The effect would be incalculable. But was it possible? Our superiority would have to be maintained, for the navy was to us what the army was to them. Since alarms about acceleration might recur, might not the Naval Attachés be allowed to inspect the yards?

After summarising the communications from the German Ambassador the Foreign Secretary concluded with some sombre reflections. "The great countries of Europe are raising enormous revenues, and something like half of them is being spent on naval and military preparations. Surely the extent to which this expenditure has grown really becomes a satire and a reflection on civilization. Not in our generation, perhaps, but if it goes on at the rate at which it has recently increased, sooner or later I believe it will submerge civilisation." Europe was in the presence of a great danger, but no single country could remove it. "If we alone, among the Great Powers, gave up the competition and sank into a position of inferiority, what good should we do? . . . We should cease to count for anything among the nations of Europe, and we should be fortunate if our liberty was left and we did not become the conscript appendage of some stronger Power."

The mood of panic passed away, but the black cloud of suspicion remained in the sky. In July the Government announced that the four extra battleships, for which the Naval Estimates had hypothetically provided, would be laid down. Metternich lamented that the feeling towards Germany had grown worse, but he felt powerless to improve matters. Things were not worse, replied Grey, except in the way he had foretold, namely that the burden of naval expenditure excited increasing apprehension. All the restlessness in Europe, argued the Ambassador, had arisen since our change of policy in 1904, which had altered the grouping of the Powers. On the contrary, retorted Grey, the old fear of war with France or

Russia had disappeared. In those years, interjected Metternich, there was no talk of war with Germany : now there was. The relations between the two countries were so strained that they could not stand an incident. This was largely the fault of the German press, replied Grey ; for instance, the King's visit to Reval had created offence. Certain English papers, explained Metternich, argued that friendship with France and Russia was necessary to keep Germany in check. It was a question of preventing the balance of power from being destroyed, replied Grey. Here indeed was British policy in a sentence. Germany was adding a formidable fleet to the strongest army in the world, and her actions were unpredictable. That the demands of the Admiralty were finally accepted by the Cabinet was mainly due to the unhesitating support of the Foreign Secretary, who wished to be prepared for the worst.

## IX

The appointment of Bethmann Hollweg on July 14, 1909, was welcomed in Downing Street, where his brilliant predecessor had long ceased to command confidence or respect. The new Chancellor, though a novice in foreign affairs, realised as clearly as Metternich that the *Flottenpolitik* was poisoning Anglo-German relations. His first step was to inform the British Ambassador of his readiness for a naval arrangement as part of a general understanding.<sup>1</sup> The friendliness was manifest, but the coupling of a naval agreement with a political formula ruined the scheme. "We could agree at once to receive proposals for a naval arrangement", minuted Grey on Goschen's telegraphic report. "They would be *in pari materia* more or less with our agreements with France and Russia, which are limited to settling differences between us on certain specified points. The wider proposals indicated by the Chancellor would go beyond anything which we have with France and Russia. It strikes me at first sight that, if any general political understanding is to be arranged, it should be one not between two Powers alone but between the two great groups of Powers, ourselves, France and Russia on the one side and the Triple Alliance on the other. Whether any understanding of this sort is possible it is difficult to say, but anything short of it is sure to be regarded as invidious by those who are left out."

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* VI, ch. 45.

After telegraphing that the Chancellor's ideas would be examined in the most friendly spirit, and digesting some highly critical comments from his official advisers, Grey jotted down some rough notes on August 31 to clear his mind. "We shall welcome naval proposals at any time, the sooner the better. The effect of a general political declaration on public opinion would be nil unless preceded by or at least accompanied by agreement about naval expenditure. In case of France and Russia good understanding was subsequent to agreement about particular points of difference, and it was not attempted to create it simultaneously. We have therefore some apprehension lest an exchange of political declarations with Germany alone, such as does not exist in case of France or Russia, might be liable to misrepresentation in those countries corresponding to that which was placed in Germany upon our understandings with France and Russia. We understand and sympathise with Germany's desire for some reassuring declaration, and wish to confirm the view of the German Chancellor that the isolation of Germany is not our aim, and that our understandings with France and Russia have no such object; but would not this be most completely achieved by a declaration to which France and Russia could be parties? In this way the Triple Alliance and the other three Great Powers of Europe might all be comprehended and a general feeling of confidence created in which all would share."

On the following day a brief telegram conveyed the reply of the British Government as approved by the Cabinet. "You can inform Chancellor that as regards naval expenditure we are not only prepared to discuss it at any time, but should cordially welcome proposals; and you should reaffirm the statement that the Chancellor's communication has made a most favourable impression upon His Majesty's Government. As regards the suggested political understanding, you can say that we must of course have regard to friendships with other Powers, but we shall receive with the greatest sympathy any proposal such as is foreshadowed by the German Chancellor which is not inconsistent with the maintenance of these friendships." After despatching this cautious response Grey added a few explanatory words in a private letter to Goschen. "There is nothing in our agreements with France and Russia which is directed against Germany, and therefore nothing to bar a friendly arrangement with Germany. But we have no



general political understanding formulated either with Russia or France ; and to do with Germany what has not been done with Russia and France would look as if we were intending to change friends. I want a good understanding with Germany, but it must be one which will not imperil those which we have with France and Russia. I should have thought some formula could be found to which they might also be parties : that would be the best and most reassuring solution, though I see that the French could not be a party to anything which looked like confirming the loss of Alsace-Lorraine." From the principles of these brief declarations, formulated a few days after receiving Bethmann's olive branch, Grey never departed during the three years of negotiation which lay ahead.

On October 14 the Chancellor explained his views to the British Ambassador, adding that he desired to know whether the British Government agreed in principle. Grey's reply was conveyed in conversation with Metternich on October 28. There would be no difficulty in giving peaceful assurances, for we had no hostile intentions. But a formula going beyond this might suggest that we were entering into closer relations with Germany than with other Powers. Germans desired some general understanding in order to make a naval arrangement possible. Englishmen, on the other hand, felt that a general understanding would be useless and indeed unacceptable so long as naval expenditure was undiminished. To remove suspicion a naval arrangement was essential. A frank exchange of information between the Admiralties would be the best start. To find satisfactory formulae would be difficult and take time. The Chancellor's object, declared Metternich, was to restore the friendly and confidential relations which used to exist. His Government felt of late that we were always acting with France and Russia in opposition to Germany. Grey defended British policy in regard to Morocco, the Bosnian crisis and the Baghdad railway. The conversation ended with the Foreign Secretary's reiteration of his readiness to receive the German proposals. When Metternich remarked that the Chancellor would also welcome proposals from us, Grey replied that any suggestions at this stage would have to deal with the naval question, and that the Admiralty would have to be consulted.

A copy of Grey's report of the conversation was communicated to the Chancellor, who acknowledged its friendliness and on November 4 proceeded to outline his naval plan. For

a certain period, say three or four years, both countries should bind themselves not to build more than an agreed number of capital ships. To Goschen's query whether fuller information concerning shipbuilding would be exchanged the Chancellor replied that he was not opposed to it, but the naval experts must decide. Passing to the political plane he desired a mutual assurance that neither would attack the others, and that, if one were attacked, the other would stand aside. Here at last was the German plan in tangible form: retardation of shipbuilding in the next few years and a promise of neutrality in a European war. The offer was unacceptable. No reduction of the German programme was suggested, and a British promise of neutrality would estrange France and Russia. Grey explained to Metternich once more that an agreement without a substantial reduction of expenditure would be regarded as worthless. Germany, rejoined the Ambassador, could not reduce unless it was quite clear that we were not going to be her enemy. Grey promised that the Admiralty should consider the naval proposals, but a review of the whole problem by the Cabinet would have to wait till the forthcoming General Election was over. It was the end of the first chapter. The British proposal of reduction was rejected in Berlin, and the request for a pledge of neutrality in a European war was declined in London. The gulf had become too wide even for a friendly Chancellor to bridge.

The negotiations slumbered not only till the close of the General Election in January 1910, but for several weeks longer.<sup>1</sup> On March 22, in reply to an observation from Metternich, Grey confessed that he had not brought the question before the Cabinet as it was occupied with other matters. There had been no indication, he added, that the German naval programme would be modified. When Metternich remarked that it could not be altered, Grey rejoined that this was the key of the situation. A few days later he told the German Chargé that he had been reflecting on what the Ambassador had said. Since an alteration in the Navy Law was ruled out a general arrangement was at present impossible; but a settlement of the Baghdad railway question, which was being discussed by British and German financiers, would greatly improve relations. The German Government, he knew, disapproved discussion *à quatre*. Separate discussion was possible, so long as the settlement was *à quatre*. With France there was no

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* VI, ch. 47.

difficulty. With regard to Russia and England a settlement might be made which included the Persian question. The advance met with no response in Berlin. Public opinion, explained Bethmann to Goschen on April 10, would not allow a preponderant influence on the most valuable section of the railway without very substantial compensation. British consent to an increase in the Turkish customs would be a concession to Turkey, not to Germany. The Baghdad and Persian problems could only be solved within the framework of a general understanding.

The Chancellor's new plan, which travelled far beyond his approaches in the previous summer, had no attraction for Grey. "We must wait for the present at any rate", he minuted, "and as to the future :

1. We cannot enter into a political understanding with Germany which would separate us from Russia and France, and leave us isolated while the rest of Europe would be obliged to look to Germany.

2. No understanding with Germany would be appreciated here unless it meant an arrest of the increase of naval expenditure.

3. We do not want to deprive Germany of the Baghdad concession, which, as the Chancellor says, is in her pocket already. All we want is that Germany should not have the only door for trade into Mesopotamia. This can be secured by Turkey giving us another door, and we cannot therefore pay a high price for entrance into the Baghdad Railway." In the autumn of 1909 there were two topics on the agenda, naval limitation and neutrality. Two more had now been added, the Baghdad Railway and Persia. As the field of discussion widened, the prospects of agreement threatened to recede.

A private letter to Goschen of May 5 embodies Grey's gloomy reflections. His proposed assent to an increase of the Turkish customs would be very unpopular, for sixty-five per cent. of the trade with Mesopotamia was British. Further concessions in return for the southern end of the Baghdad railway would be impossible. Secondly a general understanding with Germany was impossible without an arrest or decrease of naval expenditure, and the naval question had now receded into the background. Thirdly we could not sacrifice the friendship of Russia or France. Neither of them wished to pick a quarrel. "But I cannot enter into any agreement with Ger-

many which would prevent me from giving to France or Russia, should Germany take up towards either of them an aggressive attitude such as she took up towards Morocco, the same sort of support as I gave to France at the time of the Algeciras Conference and afterwards until she settled her difficulty with Germany."

Before Ministers separated for the summer holidays an explanatory Memorandum was despatched to Berlin. Since an alteration of the Navy Law was ruled out, and retardation, however welcome, would not diminish the total expenditure, a third course might be considered—an agreement that the German naval programme should not be increased, accompanied by inspection of the shipyards in both countries. Even such a limited bargain would greatly improve the atmosphere. There was no desire to force a discussion. But it seemed well to summarise the situation and to review the prospects in the hope that nothing which might seem to the Chancellor to be possible should be overlooked, discarded or discouraged, owing to any doubt on his part of the good-will of the Government. The Cabinet, explained Grey to Goschen, thought that this plan would be better than nothing; but Tirpitz would doubtless resist as usual.

On October 12 the Chancellor replied in a Memorandum accepting the exchange of information about shipbuilding. Before considering the request for a promise that the Navy Law should not be expanded, he must know what counter-concession would be offered. Finally, since any naval arrangement would affect national defence, a political understanding was essential. A formula could surely be found which would meet Germany's wishes without prejudice to Great Britain's existing agreements. In the conversation accompanying the presentation of the Memorandum he complained that German interests had often been opposed, even in cases when the interests of both countries were more or less identical. He added that, if the British people had not been taught by their Government to regard Germany as an enemy, the expansion of the German fleet would have alarmed them as little as that of the United States. The Chancellor, reported Goschen, was extremely friendly, but Kiderlen, the new Foreign Minister, seemed to be pulling the other way.

Grey's reply, despatched on November 23, stated that the Cabinet was still considering the related questions of a naval limitation and a political understanding. The willingness to

exchange information, he added, had produced a very favourable impression. On the other hand the Chancellor's accusation that the British people had been taught by their Government to regard Germany as their enemy was deeply resented. Passing to the charge that British policy in its general tendency was anti-German, Grey referred the Chancellor to an accompanying Memorandum explaining our action in regard to the Baghdad railway, Persia and the Algeiras Conference. While the Chancellor looked back to the happy days when Anglo-German relations were good, Grey could not remember a time when there had not been complaints of English unfriendliness. At recurrent intervals the German Government had put forward demands involving the abandonment of some well-established British rights or interests as the price for a continuance of their friendship, frankly declaring, and not infrequently illustrating in practice, how disagreeable Germany could be if her desires were not met. "I should lose all hope of Anglo-German relations ever being bettered if Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg were seriously to expect that, in order to replace them on what he considers to have been their old amicable footing, His Majesty's Government should abandon the protection of British interests whenever their maintenance is looked upon by the German Government as an obstacle of some enterprise or ambition of their own." It was inevitable that the German charges should receive a detailed and spirited reply, but recriminations are the worst method of repairing friendships.

At the end of 1910 there was nothing to show for sixteen months of negotiations except the consent of Germany to exchange of information by the Admiralties. Speaking to Metternich on December 16, however, Grey declared that, now the second election of the year was over, the Cabinet would further consider the whole question of a political formula and the German naval programme after the Christmas holidays. It would be difficult to find a formula which would improve our relations without being open to misconstruction in France or Russia. He hoped the German Government was also considering how the difficulty might be overcome. He would like to indicate that the Triple Alliance and what was called the "Triple Entente", though regarded by some as different camps, were not really opposite camps. That was the awkward part of the situation, interjected Metternich. The groups were regarded as maintaining the balance of power

and therefore each was considered to be a check on the other. That was their origin, replied Grey; but during the last five years, since Germany settled her difficulty with France over Morocco, he had increasingly felt that there were not antagonistic aims between the Powers. This would only be true, observed Metternich, if France renounced the *revanche*. France, replied Grey, could hardly be expected formally to renounce the lost provinces, but he did not believe that an attack on Germany was contemplated in the Franco-Russian alliance. It was a friendly conversation, for the two men trusted each other; but neither was sanguine about reaching the goal.

At the opening of 1911 Grey proposed a written agreement concerning the exchange of naval information, which the Chancellor had approved without much belief in its utility; and in March a Memorandum conveyed the reply of the British Government to the German Memorandum of October 12.<sup>1</sup> It had never been their policy to establish or encourage understandings with any foreign Power or group of Powers aimed directly or indirectly against Germany, and they were ready to give sympathetic attention to any suggested formula. They pointed out, however, that their arrangements with other Powers had not been based on a general political formula, but originated in the settlement of specific questions. An arrangement, therefore, as foreshadowed by the Chancellor, might be considered as something more comprehensive and intimate than any existing contact short of actual alliance, and might tend to impair their relations of friendship and confidence with France and Russia. "To-day His Majesty's Government believe that the special interests which have led to the present grouping of the Powers do not involve anything in the nature of opposition and still less of hostile purpose among them. But they feel that in any general formula care must be taken to avoid on the one hand undue vagueness and on the other the risk of possible misunderstanding." An agreement on certain questions, such as the Baghdad railway and railways in Persia, should therefore form part of the negotiations. They accepted the German view that some wider agreement was essential to any arrangement about naval expenditure, but the settlement of the two problems must be simultaneous.

The German reply, dated May 9, withdrew the offer of retardation, but invited proposals for a mutual reduction of expenditure not involving a departure from the Navy Law. A

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* VI, ch. 48.

general understanding, which would exclude all possibility of attack and guarantee the friendly discussion of any questions that might arise, would be the best means of allaying suspicions about each other's armaments. "Such an understanding", concluded the Memorandum, "would hardly clash with agreements of either Power with third parties, and should meet the wish of the British Government to invite the accession of the Powers with whom they have entered into special arrangements." The tone of the Memorandum was friendly enough, but its substance rendered a settlement more unlikely than ever. Retardation was withdrawn and nothing was offered in its place. "From the point of view of naval expenditure", minuted Grey, "the German reply is most unsatisfactory. On the other hand the last paragraph apparently makes it easier for us to avoid being entangled in separate political negotiations with Germany to which other Powers are not parties." Not an inch of ground had been gained since Bethmann confided his hopes to Goschen on his accession to office. The outlook, indeed, was less hopeful. Grey's confidence in the Chancellor was unimpaired, but the latter was not master in his own house. The exchange of information was accepted in principle, but no agreement had been reached.

At this moment, on May 26, 1911, Grey explained British policy to the Dominion Premiers at the meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence.<sup>1</sup> The old feuds with France and Russia had been made up, and Germany resented the reconciliation. We were most anxious to keep on the best terms with her, and he believed her to be genuinely anxious to be on good terms with us. Any understanding with her, however, must not be at the expense of others, and we must take our friends with us into any new friendship. There was no appreciable danger of our being involved in any considerable trouble in Europe unless some Power or group of Powers aimed at a Napoleonic policy. In such an event the weaker Powers would appeal to us for help. Our hands were free. But, if we merely looked on, we should be confronted with a great combination and find ourselves without a friend. If we intervened it would be in order to retain the command of the sea, which was the basis of our policy. Shortly after these words were spoken, the Agadir crisis rudely interrupted the consideration of battleships and neutrality formulas.

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* VI, 781-90.

## X

The Franco-German agreement of February 9, 1909, which Grey had welcomed as the liquidation of a perilous feud, was a false dawn, for economic co-operation in Morocco between suspicious rivals proved impracticable. At the opening of 1911 it was clear that the calm weather of 1909-10 could not continue, and that a fresh trial of strength was at hand. In the spring the safety of Fez appeared to the French Government to be menaced by a revolt.<sup>1</sup> On April 20 Cambon announced that the situation was becoming daily more critical, that at the urgent request of the Sultan a Moorish relief force would be organised by French agents in the West, and that a French column was prepared to advance for the protection of Europeans in case of need. Here were all the elements of a first-class crisis. Germany could hardly be expected to watch unmoved the march of French troops to Fez ; and the Spanish Ambassador intimated unofficially that, if France entered the capital, Spain would occupy certain towns in the zone allotted to her by the secret Franco-Spanish treaty of 1904.

At this early stage of the drama Grey played a passive part. Replying to a question in Parliament on April 25 he declared that there were ten British subjects residing at Fez, that the arrangements being made under French supervision should afford the necessary protection, and that no special measures were needed to safeguard British interests in that part of Morocco. He also wired to Madrid that it would be premature for Spain to act as if the independence and integrity of Morocco were threatened by the action of the French. "Something is necessary to assure safety of Europeans at Fez, and French expectation is that in a short time emergency will have passed, a settlement will have been made with the tribes, and order will have been restored. Any French force at or near Fez will then be withdrawn. It is only if these expectations fail to be realized that Spain will have ground for claiming execution of secret agreement. It would be most unwise for Spain to force partition of Morocco. The political consequences would be deplorable." If Grey felt any doubt about the action of France he concealed it, for it was the essence of the entente that she should have a free hand in Morocco. To the Italian Ambassador he expressed his conviction that she

<sup>1</sup> G. and T. VII, chs. 52 and 53 ; Tardieu, *Le Mystère d'Agadir* ; Jaechh, *Kiderlen-Waechter* ; Caillaux, *Agadir*.



had no desire to alter the *status quo*, and that it was most undesirable to construe her action as being contrary to the Act of Algeciras. To the Austrian Ambassador, who asked whether he had any news from Morocco, he replied that the news from Fez was bad, and that the first thing was to relieve the town as soon as possible. If the French had not already taken measures, we should have had to ask them to do so.

Grey's first conversation with Metternich about the expedition was friendly in form, but there was thunder in the air. In view of the anxiety about European residents, he began, the French had clearly no choice. What was the German view? His Government, replied the Ambassador, believed that they did not desire to stay in Fez. If, however, they were forced to go further and make the Sultan a mere puppet, a new situation inconsistent with the Algeciras Act would arise and the hands of the other Powers would be freed. If it arose, rejoined Grey, he hoped it would not stir up political difficulties; for, while in other questions our hands were free, in Morocco we were bound by treaty to support the policy of France. On May 21, three days after this conversation, the French marched into Fez, and Grey gave Cambon a gentle hint. To have relieved the place without fighting and to have found everybody safe was a great success. It would complete it if they could make a peaceful settlement and withdraw. When the Ambassador complained of Spanish designs he replied that, however soon the French left Fez, and however well everything went, French influence would be much strengthened in the capital and Spain would expect compensation.

While loyally backing up France in public, Grey's anxiety was increasing. Spain was on the warpath and there was ominous silence in Berlin. "I am afraid", he confided to Bertie, "that, unless Spain can be put in a more equal position in her sphere as regards France, we shall not be able to hold her. The French have enormously strengthened their position in Morocco by what they have done, and Spain will expect to have her position strengthened in her sphere. . . . We are already skating on very thin ice in maintaining that the Act of Algeciras is not affected by all that has happened, and every week that the French remain at Fez the ice will get thinner. If the Act of Algeciras does go by the board, partition of Morocco between France and Spain will ensue. I do not suppose that it would be impossible to get Germany's consent to pay a price, though that price need not necessarily be any-

thing in Morocco." A week later he wrote again to Bertie. "I am afraid the French have got too deeply in to get out, and they will have to go through with a partition of Morocco, in which there will be some difficult and rough water to navigate and some price to be paid." The occupation on June 28 of Larache and Alcazar in the zone of influence assigned to Spain was a new complication. Grey pointed out to the Spanish Ambassador that his country was running two dangers. She might provoke trouble among the tribes in the north, and she might precipitate a European crisis leading to the partition of Morocco. She was playing with fire, and he strongly urged her Government to be careful. His expostulations were naturally in vain. Where France had led, Spain had followed. Moreover, as he explained to Cambon, if she were pressed too hard, it would throw her into the arms of Germany.

On July 1 the *Panther*, a German gunboat, arrived at Agadir, a closed port on the Atlantic coast.<sup>1</sup> German firms in that district, it was explained, were alarmed by a certain ferment among the tribes, and had asked protection for the lives of their employees and their property. A warship had therefore been sent to help in case of need to protect the important German interests there. When order had been restored in Morocco, the vessel would be withdrawn. This rather colourless *Aide-Mémoire* was supplemented by a more significant verbal communication. The advance to Fez, declared Metternich to Nicolson, and the establishment of French and Spanish posts in various parts of Morocco, had created a new situation and infringed the Algeciras Act. Germany was ready to co-operate with France and Spain in the search for a solution of the Morocco question. The aid of the British Government in this task would be welcomed.

Two days later Grey told Metternich that the situation must be considered by the Cabinet, but the German Government should be informed at once that we regarded it as new and important. It was also very delicate, and public opinion here and elsewhere must not be inflamed. The German action was very abrupt. Our commercial interests were considerably larger than theirs. We could not remain passive spectators of a new settlement made between Germany, France and Spain to replace the Act of Algeciras, but must share in the discussion. Grey's tone, reported the Ambassador, though not sharp was serious. Next day, after a Cabinet meeting, he declared in the

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* VII, ch. 54.

name of the Government that we must consider our treaty obligations to France and our interests in Morocco. A new situation had been created by the despatch of a German ship to Agadir. Future developments might affect British interests more directly, and we could not recognise any new arrangement arrived at without us. Metternich retorted that the new situation had been created far more by the action of France and Spain. Two days later the Prime Minister announced in Parliament that a new situation had arisen and that we should take part in the discussion, having due regard to the protection of our interests and the fulfilment of our well-known treaty obligations to France.

The official pronouncements of July 4 and 6, though they asked no questions, seemed to their authors to invite a formal response. When on July 11 Kiderlen made a general reference to the Morocco question, Goschen remarked that the attitude of his Government had been made absolutely clear. A conversation *à trois* between Germany, France and Spain, of which there had been some mention, would be unacceptable. The Foreign Minister replied that no such idea had been entertained, and begged him to inform his Government of the fact. He had been having very friendly talks with the French Ambassador, and he quite hoped they would find a solution. On the following day, July 12, in conversation with Nicolson, Metternich remarked that Germany never intended to exclude England from any discussion of the future of Morocco. Nicolson replied that his Government would maintain a reserved attitude until they knew her aims and desires.

Grey's attitude was defined in a telegram to Bertie on July 13. "It appears *prima facie* as if a settlement by which, in return for compensation in French Congo, Germany ceased to make difficulties in Morocco would be very satisfactory and without prejudice to British interests. But I cannot of course express a final opinion without knowing precisely what Germany intends to ask and to give. It is at any rate infinitely preferable to any basis for negotiations which included compensation to Germany in Morocco." A German footing on the Mediterranean would be absolutely irreconcilable with British interests. An unfortified post on the west coast was not vital. Five days later, on July 18, alarming news arrived that Kiderlen had put forward inadmissible demands including the most valuable portion of the French Congo, and that the French Government desired Grey's views on the new situa-

tion. Once again the question arose whether we should stand by France in the event of war. "Germany", minuted Crowe, "is playing for the highest stakes. . . . This is a trial of strength."

After consulting the Prime Minister and the First Lord of the Admiralty, Grey replied that, if negotiations broke down over unacceptable German demands, the British Government might propose a Conference of the signatories of the Algeciras Act. Would France approve? And would she veto a German foothold in Morocco? The British Government did not, provided satisfactory conditions were obtained. If a settlement based on compensation in the French Congo proved impossible, it would not be possible to exclude Germany from Morocco and to place France in possession without war. The French Government replied that they did not reject the idea of a Conference, but that a concession to Germany of any portion of Morocco was inadmissible. On the same day, July 19, Grey confided his anxieties to the Prime Minister. The German Government had taken no notice of the declaration of July 4. "They will assume that we know the demand they have made upon France and, if we give no sign, their attitude will stiffen; all chance of their settling with France about the French Congo will disappear, and there will be further developments at Agadir that will make it more difficult to draw back and to accept reasonable terms." As foreign affairs would be discussed in a few days in the House of Commons, he proposed to tell Germany on July 21 that, if her negotiations with France broke down, we should have to join in the discussion, and that, unless informed by her of any new developments at Agadir, we should have to send ships to protect our interests.

These views were elaborated in a frank letter to Bertie on July 20. "The French have drifted into difficulties without knowing which way they really want to go. We are bound and prepared to give them diplomatic support, but we cannot go to war in order to set aside the Algeciras Act and put France in virtual possession of Morocco. If she can get that for herself we are bound not to stand in her way, or to claim more rights than we are entitled to under the Anglo-French agreement of 1904; but if we go to war it must be in defence of British interests. An attempt by Germany to humiliate France might affect British interests so seriously that we should have to resist it, but there is no case for that at present. France, Spain and Germany have all stepped outside the Algeciras Act together. France perhaps is less wrong technically because

she went to Fez at the request of the Sultan, but in effect she has turned Morocco into a French protectorate. If one looks at the map of Africa and considers the large amount coloured British and coloured French, much larger each of them than all that Germany has, it is obvious that neither France nor we can put more of our own colour on the map without Germany getting some substantial addition to her sphere. . . . The best solution would be a deal between France and Germany based upon some concession in the French Congo." Had the Germans been able to read this candid admission that Morocco had virtually become a French protectorate and that Germany had a claim to substantial compensation, they would have realised that Grey was more impartial than his public utterances conveyed.

On the following day, July 21, according to plan, Grey spoke to the German Ambassador.<sup>1</sup> He had no formal communication to make, but our silence did not mean that we were taking no interest in the Morocco question. Hoping that France and Germany might reach a settlement on the basis of a rectification of the frontier of the French Congo, we had stood aside. But the news that Berlin was demanding virtually a cession of the French Congo, which it was obviously impossible for France to grant, made him anxious. If the negotiations failed a very embarrassing situation would arise. Agadir was the most suitable port on the coast for a naval base. What was taking place there we did not know. Perhaps the German flag might already have been hoisted. The longer the Germans remained the more difficult to withdraw, and the more necessary to take some step to protect British interests. "Count Metternich", reported Grey, "was not in a position to give me any information." The Foreign Minister, reported the Ambassador, feared the breakdown of the negotiations and desired to take part in them. It was clear that he would support the French and would grudge Germany a footing in Agadir, but that outside Morocco he was full of good will.

On the same afternoon Lloyd George visited Grey and asked if a reply had been received to the communication of July 4.<sup>2</sup> On hearing there was none, he produced a statement which he proposed to make that evening at an official dinner at the Mansion House. Both the project and the text were approved by Grey and the Prime Minister. Neither Germany

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* VII, ch. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, I, 41-6.

nor Morocco was mentioned, but the warning was clear enough. "If a situation were to be forced upon us in which peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won by centuries of effort and achievement, by allowing Britain to be treated where her interests are vitally affected as if she were of no account in the Cabinet of Nations, then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure." The significance of these ringing words was underlined by a strident leader in *The Times*.

The date of the speech had long been fixed, and more than one Minister complained that such a step should have been taken without reference to the Cabinet. Grey seems to have been strangely unaware that he had authorised the launching of a high explosive. It was precisely the same claim to be considered that the Kaiser had championed at Tangier, and it provoked a precisely similar reaction. The German people saw Paris and Berlin in negotiation, and no French voice had sounded the alarm. Suddenly a contingent declaration of war was flung across the North Sea. England seemed as eager to thwart the colonial and commercial ambitions of Germany as to encourage those of France. The modification of the German demands was claimed by its author as a justification of the speech, but this advantage was purchased at the price of enduring embitterment and the acceleration of the armaments race. The Agadir crisis indeed reflects little credit on the diplomacy of London, Paris or Berlin. Schooled by the bitter memories of 1905, France should have taken care to make a deal with Germany before ordering her troops to Fez. Kiderlen should have chosen a less spectacular method of presenting Germany's just claim to compensation, and should have sent an early and reassuring response to the British declaration of July 4. Grey should have waited for a reply to his communication of July 21 before sanctioning the Mansion House pronouncement. In fairness to the Foreign Secretary it must be remembered that he was concerned, not with the Chancellor whom he trusted, but with Kiderlen, in whom he placed no confidence at all. "It is too much to say that relations are strained at the present moment," he wrote to the First Lord of the Admiralty on July 24, "for we have asked nothing of Germany yet nor she of us.<sup>1</sup> But they might at any moment become strained, and we are dealing with people

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* VII, 625.

who recognise no law except that of force between nations, and whose fleet is mobilised at the present moment, for I suppose mobilisation for manœuvres at full strength could be used if desired for attack."

On July 24 Metternich brought the response to Grey's communication of July 21. The *Panther* had been sent to Agadir to protect German interests and for no other cause. Not a man had been or would be landed unless German lives were menaced. Germany had never thought of a naval port on the Moroccan coast and had no designs on Moroccan territory. If France wanted a free hand in Morocco she must offer compensation. Visibly relieved, Grey inquired whether he might announce that no landing had taken place. The Ambassador replied that he must consult his Government. The Mansion House speech does not appear to have been mentioned, but it had begun to cast its shadow over the scene.

On the following day, a conversation of very different character took place. Metternich announced that, after the provocative words of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the assurances he had conveyed must not be used in Parliament. Nobody must think that the German Government had made a declaration of intentions in consequence of that speech. The speech, interjected Grey, seemed to him to give no cause for complaint; for it could only cause surprise if it had been thought that we might be disregarded. If France refused an agreement, continued the Ambassador, Germany must demand that the Treaty of Algéciras should be observed and the *status quo ante* be restored. A Conference would be needless. If no other signatory was willing to join in vindicating the Treaty, Germany unaided would secure by all means full respect for her rights. The Ambassador proceeded to read a protest against the speech. The German proposals seemed to his Government quite acceptable, and they concerned territories in which English interests were not engaged. If, however, England had desires, they should surely have been transmitted through the usual diplomatic channel, instead of by a public declaration which had been interpreted by the British and French press as a warning bordering on menace. That was not the way to further a friendly understanding between Germany and France. No better means of embroiling the situation and leading to a violent explosion could have been found. Grey defended the speech on the ground that it merely claimed the consideration due to a great nation. The

conversation, which the Ambassador described as extremely lively, ended on a softer note. It was not intended by anything that had been or would be said, declared the Foreign Secretary, to embroil Germany's negotiations with France, which we sincerely desired to succeed. Grey was profoundly disturbed by the interview. "I have just received a communication from the German Ambassador", he remarked to Lloyd George and Churchill, "so stiff that the fleet might be attacked at any moment. I have sent for McKenna to warn him."<sup>1</sup>

After each party had blown off steam the situation improved. On July 27 Metternich brought a fresh communication couched in the friendliest terms and containing no reference to the Mansion House speech. Adverse criticism from the English side must obviously render the negotiations more difficult, while a public statement that England would welcome a successful conclusion of Franco-German *pourparlers* would have a most beneficial influence. The desired statement was made in the House of Commons the same afternoon by the Prime Minister. Conversations were proceeding between France and Germany, to which we were not a party. "But it is our desire that these conversations should issue in a settlement honourable and satisfactory to both the parties, and of which H.M. Government can cordially say that it in no way prejudices British interests. We believe that to be quite possible; we earnestly and sincerely desire to see it accomplished." On the following day Grey unbosomed himself in a letter to Bertie. "To get Morocco as she has Tunis would be a great step for France. It is worth her while to pay a good price for it." The necessity of publicly standing by his French and Russian friends once again concealed the fact that the Foreign Minister was much less of a partisan than he appeared.

A lull followed the Mansion House hurricane, but on August 9 Grey confided his anxieties to the Russian Ambassador.<sup>2</sup> Kiderlen was evidently not in a hurry. Perhaps he was merely taking time to retreat, but it was just possible that he was planning a fresh *coup*. In that event much would depend on what Russia was prepared to do and on what Germany thought she would do. The Ambassador pointed to the Franco-Russian alliance; but the unwillingness of Russia to fight for Morocco was notorious, and Iswolsky, her Ambassador in Paris, was not encouraging. Though the Tsar was ready to fulfil his obligations, the reorganisation of his army

<sup>1</sup> Churchill, *The World Crisis*, I, 47-8.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T.* VII, ch. 56.



was far from complete. The knowledge that France's ally had no stomach for a fight was a prime factor in Kiderlen's calculations. For the moment Grey could merely look on. To a private inquiry from Austen Chamberlain he replied that the two parties were a little nearer. He did not want to hinder the negotiations by any stiff language about Germany so long as there was a prospect of a reasonable settlement. On the other hand he did not want by any soothing words to make Germany think that our attitude was weakening. Holding to his plan of a Conference, he refused to be hustled by the French. It was an anxious time. In case of a Franco-German war, he remarked to Benckendorff, England would hardly be able to stand aside.<sup>1</sup> On August 23 Cambon reported the decision of his Government, if a German force landed at Agadir, to send ships to Mogador and Saffi and land troops to Marakesh. He hoped we would send ships to the same ports. Before we could take any active step, rejoined Grey, we should propose a Conference. To the inquiry what we should do if it was refused he replied that he would consult his colleagues. On the same day the Committee of Imperial Defence anxiously discussed the technical problem of intervention in a Continental war.<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of September Grey offered some friendly advice to Paris. There were three alternatives before the French, he wrote to Bertie: France securing Morocco subject to economic liberty, a retreat to the Act of Algeciras, or war.<sup>3</sup> The first was by far the best and was worth a good price. It was a delicate matter to say this to Caillaux and de Selves; but the situation was serious, and the extent of British support in case of trouble would depend on the demonstration that France had no reasonable and honourable way of avoiding it. Four days later he wrote that he had the authority of the Cabinet to propose a Conference in case of need. "It is essential that before war comes (if it does come) it should be clear that Germany has meant war and has forced it: unless that is so I could not be sure of what the force of public opinion here would be, and if the Government has to take a decision for war it must have the strongest possible case to put before Parliament." His policy throughout the crisis is crystal clear: support of French claims in Morocco, approval

<sup>1</sup> Benckendorff, II, 141-2, August 16.

<sup>2</sup> Churchill, *The World Crisis*, I, 55-60.

<sup>3</sup> G. and T. VII, ch. 58.

of substantial compensation to Germany, a Conference in the event of a deadlock, and intervention in a conflict demonstrably provoked by German intransigence.

September was scarcely less tempestuous than August or July. The Cartwright interview at Marienbad added fuel to the flame, and the Ambassador's *démenti* produced no effect in Berlin. "The negotiations with Germany", wrote Grey to Nicolson on September 17 during a brief holiday, "may at any moment take an unfavourable turn, and if they do so the Germans may act very quickly—even suddenly. The Admiralty should remain prepared for this: it is what I have always said to McKenna. Our fleets should therefore always be in such a condition and position that they would welcome a German attack if the Germans decided to act suddenly. We should of course give the Admiralty news immediately of any unfavourable turn in the Franco-German negotiations, but German action might follow so soon after this that there would not be time to get our ships together, if they were not already in position whence this could be done quickly. I should like to be sure that the Admiralty are keeping this in mind. I am puzzled by the German optimistic reports of the prospect of the Franco-German negotiations. They may be and probably are intended to prepare the way for a climb down; but they may be intended to mislead and lull suspicions before a rapid *coup*." Never even during the Bosnian crisis had Grey written in such an anxious strain, and the French Embassy reported on the feverish activity of the Admiralty and the War Office.<sup>1</sup>

A Morocco accord was initialled on October 11, and the joint Morocco-Congo treaty was signed on November 4. Two days later Grey expressed his satisfaction to Metternich at what he hoped was a permanent settlement of the problem, but on November 17 the Ambassador described the embitterment of German feeling in the frankest terms. Another menace, he believed, would mean war. All parties naturally proceeded to give their version of the crisis which for four months had kept Europe on the rack; and when Grey made his anxiously awaited speech on November 27, the German, though not the French, declarations were before him.<sup>2</sup> None of his major utterances was so carefully prepared. Beginning with a narrative of the Anglo-German exchanges during July and a spirited defence of the Mansion House speech, he declared that everything we had done or said in our communications with

<sup>1</sup> *D.D.F.* I, 140-4, 190-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Speeches*, 145-171.

the French Government was in the direction of helping the negotiations. An agreement had been reached in which both sides made substantial concessions and substantial gains, a fact very creditable to its authors; but certain people seemed to delight in suggesting that we had been near to war. "Really it is as if the world were indulging in a fit of political alcoholism, and the best that can be done by those of us who are in positions of responsibility is to keep cool and sober." Referring to the recent sensational disclosures of Captain Faber in regard to naval and military plans and movements during the Morocco crisis, he admitted that there had been at times considerable anxiety as to how France and Germany were to find a solution. If either had abruptly broken off the negotiations, it was difficult to foretell the next move. We should have proposed a conference, but we were not sure that Germany would accept.

Passing to general considerations Grey declared that his policy was a continuation of that of his predecessor—maintaining friendship with France and ending the friction with Russia. These friendships were a guarantee that neither Power would pursue a provocative or aggressive policy towards Germany, knowing as they did that British opinion would not support it. "One of the essential conditions of the friendship of ourselves with France and Russia in the last few years has been the certain knowledge that neither they nor we wish to pursue a provocative or aggressive policy." Germany was so strong that no country would seek to quarrel with her. But her great and growing strength imposed on her the duty of preventing apprehensions in the minds of other Powers lest she might have aggressive intentions towards them. "I do not believe in these aggressive designs." To turn our back on the Continent, however, to revert to the policy of "splendid isolation", to announce that under no circumstances would we assist a friend against wanton attack, would be disastrous. "It would deprive us of the possibility of having a friend in Europe, and it would result in the other nations of Europe, either by choice or necessity, being brought into the orbit of a single diplomacy from which we should be excluded." New friendships were not made worth having by deserting old ones. But that principle was no bar to good relations with Germany. Many Germans complained that we always stood in their way and objected to their expansion. In Morocco we had a special agreement, but we had no wish to obstruct elsewhere in

Africa. If changes were to be made in friendly negotiation with other Powers, we should not oppose. The Chancellor's recent speeches indicated his desire to see Germany strong but not aggressive. "If that is the spirit of German policy, then I am sure that in two or three years the talk about a great European war will have passed away, and there will have been a growth of good will, not only between Germany and England, but between those two countries and the friends of both." The speech, which delighted Cambon, was not unfriendly, but the coolness of tone struck listeners in London hardly less than Bethmann and other readers in Berlin. In the words of his closest friend, he seemed to doubt whether the Germans were genuinely good people, and they of course knew that he doubted it.<sup>1</sup> He doubted it more than ever after Agadir.

## XI

When the crisis was over, there was talk of resuming the discussions on the exchange of naval information. There was, however, a feeling in some quarters on both sides of the North Sea that after a period of such peril a wider settlement should be sought. The Anglo-German Friendship Society, under the leadership of Lord Avebury and Sir Frank Lascelles, strove to prepare the ground. On December 20 Metternich, unwearied in his efforts to keep the two countries in tune though not very hopeful of success, opened his mind informally to Grey.<sup>2</sup> Even if no territorial questions arose, perhaps they might work together where their interests were concerned. Grey indicated the Baghdad railway as a possible field of co-operation, and the Ambassador then turned the conversation to the Portuguese colonies. Portugal was in a very bad financial position, and the disposal of her colonies might become a practical question. As regards the Belgian Congo, Grey declared that, if it were for sale, we should not try to prevent German territory spreading across Africa, though we should doubtless ask for a right of way for a railway from north to south. He would discuss these matters during the Christmas holidays with the Prime Minister and the Colonial Secretary. To the record of this conversation he added a minute inviting the special attention of his colleagues. Some things were possible which he did not like to mention to the Ambassador

<sup>1</sup> Haldane, *Autobiography*, 215.

<sup>2</sup> G. and T. VI, 650-1.

till they had been brought before the Cabinet. Realising that a satisfactory naval agreement was a dream and rejecting the plan of a neutrality formula, he welcomed the prospect of regional settlements. The Kaiser was less hopeful, and minuted on Metternich's despatch: So long as Grey remains in office a real political understanding is unattainable. When Cambon inquired some weeks later whether the Portuguese Colonies were under discussion, Grey replied that Metternich had raised the question unofficially.<sup>1</sup> The state of feeling in Germany was such that things must get either better or worse. It was necessary to talk with the German Government; but, whatever developments occurred, we should take care that they did not impair our relations with France.

At this moment, as a result of the well-meaning activities of Ballin and Cassel, it was decided that Haldane, who was not only Secretary for War but Grey's closest friend, should visit Berlin.<sup>2</sup> Sazonoff was informed that the emissary would have frank and informal talks with the Chancellor, and find out whether there was a favourable prospect for negotiations. "Till Lord Haldane reports I cannot say what the prospect is, but in any case there will be no developments to impair our present good relations with Russia. France has made her agreement with Germany about Morocco, and the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs settled some questions at Potsdam last year. It is very desirable that we should also settle some of our questions, if possible, or present relations with Germany may get worse." A similar reassurance was sent to Paris. On the same day Grey explained the situation to Metternich. The Emperor had expressed a wish through an unofficial channel that he should go to Berlin to negotiate; but such a visit would be a mistake unless it led to some definite result which could be announced. Haldane would explore the ground and see whether formal negotiations could follow. Whoever had taken the initiative, it was not Grey.

Haldane reached Berlin on February 8 and left three days later, having surveyed a wide field of naval, political and colonial problems with the Kaiser, the Chancellor and Tirpitz. His object was to listen and explain, not to promise or decide. After hearing a summary of the conversations immediately on his return Grey answered Metternich's inquiries in a hopeful

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* VI, 664, February 3, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T.* VI, ch. 49; B. F. Schmitt, *Lord Haldane's Mission to Berlin*, in *The Crusades and other Historical Essays*, ed. Pactow, 245-288. The Mission is described in detail in the chapter on Bethmann.

mood. The Chancellor evidently desired a great effort to render peace more secure, not only between Germany and England, but in the whole of Europe, and England shared his wish. In reporting the substance of the conversations to Cambon and Benckendorff he added that the Chancellor had been most friendly, and was, he was convinced, quite sincere. Unfortunately the sky quickly clouded over, for the new German Navy Bill, of which a copy had been handed to Haldane, proved to be of a formidable character. On February 22 Metternich conversed with Grey and Haldane together, who stressed the difficulty of making a political agreement at the moment of a substantial increase of the German fleet. The Ambassador replied that the increase was less than the Admiralty supposed. Two days later Grey gave him a Memorandum setting forth the views of the Admiralty on the new bill, and stating that a corresponding increase would have to be made. There were also difficulties, he added, in regard to Timor and other matters discussed at Berlin.

On March 6 Metternich presented a Memorandum containing the German version of the Haldane discussions, and complaining that the Government had subsequently shifted its ground. The Chancellor was unpleasantly surprised by the turn in the negotiations, more particularly by the comments on the new Navy bill. Moreover his Government had expected that we should propose a neutrality agreement. Successful negotiations were impossible unless political and naval questions were combined. Grey replied that the Memorandum must be referred to the Admiralty. Even if no public agreement could be reached, he hoped that the better atmosphere created by the visit would remain. His words suggest that he had little expectation of an agreement, and Haldane's impression of the Memorandum was equally unfavourable. The account of his conversations, he declared, was full of inaccuracies, and the Tirpitz party seemed to be putting spokes in the Chancellor's wheel.

The conflict between Bethmann and Tirpitz, which Haldane had sensed at Berlin, was dramatically revealed on the day after Haldane's comments on the Memorandum were composed. On the evening of March 11 Metternich told Haldane that he had heard from the Chancellor. He gathered that, if we would offer a suitable political formula, the navy bill would be withdrawn and a much smaller programme introduced. A statement about the bill would have to be made almost at

once in the Reichstag, and he requested a formula as a reason for dropping the naval proposals in their present form. If, having offered the formula, we were subsequently dissatisfied with the reductions, we were free to withdraw it. "The German move", commented Grey on Haldane's brief report, "is very extraordinary." A formula was promptly drafted, approved by the Cabinet, and presented to Metternich on March 14. "England will make no unprovoked attack upon Germany and pursue no aggressive policy towards her. Aggression upon Germany is not the subject and forms no part of any Treaty understanding or combination to which England is now a party, nor will she become a party to anything that has such an object."

Metternich promptly replied that these words would hardly satisfy Berlin, since no mention was made of neutrality. He suggested two alternative additions: "England will therefore observe at least a benevolent neutrality should war be forced upon Germany," or "England will therefore, as a matter of course, remain neutral if a war is forced upon Germany." This would only be binding if we were satisfied with the revised naval programme. He was anxious to learn without a moment's delay what reductions in the *Novelle* we desired, since important decisions would be taken at Berlin in the next few days. The Cabinet must consider the formula, replied Grey, but the British draft required no addition. "I told him quite frankly how the growing strength of Germany had given rise to an anxiety in this country that a day might come when a German Government might desire to crush France. If such a contingency arose, though our hands were quite free as they were now, we might not be able to sit still: for we should feel that, if we did sit still and allowed France to be crushed, we should have to fight alone later on. All the military conversations or preparations of which he might have heard had meant simply that, improbable as such a contingency might be, we had considered what we should do if it arose and we decided to take action. On the other hand I had given France clearly to understand that, if France was aggressive towards Germany or attacked Germany, no support would be forthcoming from us or would be approved by British public opinion. Our formula, as it stood, exactly expressed this situation."

On March 16, after consultation with his colleagues, Grey informed Metternich that a promise of neutrality was impossible. We had the greatest confidence in the Chancellor, but

he might be speedily overthrown. The Kaiser was incensed at the idea that Germany was ruled by anybody but himself. Bethmann replied that our promise not to make or join in an unprovoked war was so elastic as to be valueless. The person of the Emperor was a guarantee that German policy would continue to be conducted on friendly and peaceful lines. The *Novelle* could only be modified if we concluded an agreement guaranteeing neutrality of a far-reaching character, and leaving no doubt as to its interpretation. Grey explained that the Chancellor was asking for an agreement which went much further than anything we had with France and Russia. Our relations with those two countries, which at times had been very bad, had improved without so far-reaching an arrangement. He was ready to continue to discuss in a friendly way all questions that arose, and he saw no reason why the German Government should not do the same. The formal reply to the German Memorandum of March 6, dated March 21, gave the British version of the Haldane Mission. Metternich reported to the Chancellor that Grey ardently desired an understanding with Germany, and in that respect was now more Germanophil than many of his colleagues. But there was nothing more to be done, and the *Novelle* passed into law. The failure of the discussions was regretted far more in Berlin than in London, where the apprehensions of France had to be kept continually in mind. Whereas we had long abandoned the hope of a reduction of German ship-building, the German Government had manifested an almost feverish anxiety for a neutrality formula.

When Marschall succeeded Metternich, who had lost the Kaiser's favour owing to his frank criticisms of the *Flottenpolitik*, he avowed his personal desire for a simple formula of friendliness and non-aggression, but after fruitless discussions lasting nearly three years it seemed useless to re-open the question. Henceforth Anglo-German exchanges shifted from battleships and neutrality to the Baghdad railway and the Portuguese colonies. The confidence of Grey and Bethmann in one another was unimpaired, and the former's contention that friendliness might exist and increase without a political formula was confirmed. Yet the welcome *détente* changed nothing in the structure of Europe. The Franco-German antagonism was as bad as ever. Germany continued to build her fleet, and England drew ever closer to her Continental friends. European politics had begun to revolve in a vicious circle which nobody seemed able to break. The rapid increase



of the German navy drove Great Britain into ever closer intimacy with France and Russia, while the growing solidarity of the Triple Entente inevitably stimulated the demand in Germany for the strengthening of her defences. Each group was genuinely, though in large measure unnecessarily, afraid of the other. Even at the best of times Grey used to wonder what the Kaiser or one of his more temperamental advisers, such as Tirpitz or Kiderlen, would do next; for he realised that the trusted and pacific Chancellor was not the captain of the ship.

## XII

The alarms of Agadir sent Churchill to the Admiralty with a new broom, and the *Novelle* determined the British Government to strengthen our defences in home waters at the expense of the Mediterranean, despite the expansion of the Austrian fleet. How could the vacuum be filled except by French aid, and how could that aid be secured without turning the entente into an alliance? Such were the questions which occupied the Cabinet throughout 1912. The answers were found in the Mediterranean agreement, which was initiated by the Admiralty, and in the Grey-Cambon letters which, at the request of the French, defined the relations of the two Governments.<sup>1</sup>

In May 1912 Cambon informed Nicolson that the French naval authorities desired to renew conversations with the Admiralty. The French Government wished that the British navy should look after the Channel and France take care of the Mediterranean. Russia had recently expressed her desire for a Franco-Russian Naval Convention corresponding to their Military Agreement. France favoured the plan, but suggested that England should be asked to join. The thoughts of Grey's advisers were running on the same lines. The evil consequences of reducing our strength in the Mediterranean, argued Crowe in an elaborate Memorandum, could be partially averted if the place of our Mediterranean squadron were taken by a powerful French fleet. The cheapest, simplest and safest solution, suggested Nicolson, would be an understanding with France whereby she would undertake to safeguard our interests in the Mediterranean in the early period of a war. The proposal of the Admiralty, wrote Grey to Kitchener, raised very serious questions. "We are on such good terms with France

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. X*, Part 2, ch. 96.

that it is not necessary for us to keep ships in the Mediterranean to counterbalance the French ships ; but we have no arrangement with France, such as an alliance, which would give us right to assume that France would necessarily be involved in any war in which we were involved and would protect our Mediterranean possessions or occupations for us." The safety of Egypt was concerned, and Kitchener was invited to meet the Prime Minister and the First Lord of the Admiralty at Malta. Grey told Cambon that we could not discuss questions with the French Naval Attaché till we had finally decided on the redistribution of our fleet, but the stars in their courses were driving the two countries together. "We cannot expect the French not to make use of our desertion of the Mediterranean as a lever to extract something tangible from us", commented Bertie. What they wanted was the assurance of support against a German attack. A military alliance, they were well aware, was at present impossible, but the partnership might be developed by stages till the goal came in sight.

The Malta meeting approved the plan of an agreement with France. If we defended her northern coasts her fleet in the Mediterranean, in combination with our remaining ships, should be sufficient to ensure victory against Italy and Austria in a war with the Triple Alliance. The Admiralty proposed to keep two or three Battle Cruisers and a Cruiser Squadron in the Mediterranean. In addition a squadron of eight battle-ships, based on Gibraltar, would cruise in the Mediterranean, and would only be withdrawn in case of grave danger of war with Germany. Submarine defence would be organised at Malta and Alexandria. The conference was purely consultative, but the main lines of the programme were approved by the Cabinet.

On July 5 the German Ambassador lamented that the Powers nowadays discussed their relations in terms of naval strength. That factor, rejoined Grey, could not be ignored. If Germany had continued to possess a small fleet and we a small army, neither could have threatened the life of the other. It would be against Germany's interest to attack us, interjected the Ambassador, even if it were in her power. Public opinion, retorted Grey, was not always guided by self-interest : national prestige also played a part. Without attributing aggressive designs, people could not but ask what the German fleet might do if it became stronger than ours. If we, with the strongest fleet, were to announce that we intended to have an

army on the Continental basis, so that we could put millions of men into the field, would not the German press regard it as a menace?

The decisions of the British Government were announced on July 22. On the same day Grey told Cambon that the conversations between the Admiralties must not commit the Governments in time of war, for they could not know everything which passed between the experts. This had been made clear to the French Naval Attaché by Churchill, replied Cambon, and was well understood. If we were asked whether there was a military or naval arrangement between the two Governments, we could say there was none. Of course there was no formal "entente," interjected Grey. There was only a moral "Entente", replied the Ambassador, which might be transformed into a formal "Entente", if the Governments desired, when an occasion arose. Cambon, concluded Grey's report, seemed quite satisfied with the conversation. What Grey had said in 1906 he repeated in 1912, but there was one great difference between the two occasions. While the earlier conversations remained a secret, the latter resulted in visible changes. The strengthening of our fleet in home waters continued the naval policy inaugurated by Fisher, and, if the vacuum in the Mediterranean had been filled by new construction, the political relations between London and Paris would have been unchanged. When, however, France moved her battleships to the Mediterranean, leaving her northern and Atlantic coasts exposed, and when we no longer depended entirely on our own strength in the Mediterranean, the conclusion seemed inescapable that we were allies in everything but name. Facts spoke louder than formulas.

A few days after Churchill's speech the French Ambassador suggested an exchange of notes. The statement of non-committal in the document drawn up in the Admiralty with the French Naval Attaché did not suffice. France would certainly ask whether we should protect her undefended coasts against attack. If the formula, which seemed out of place in an arrangement between naval experts, were to remain, it was essential that the Governments should agree to communicate with each other in case of menace and concert beforehand. If private notes to this effect were exchanged, we should still be able to deny any binding agreement. There were great objections to secret notes, replied Grey. Why could not the situation be left as it was? The Governments would of course

consult each other in case of menace. He could not write a Note containing an engagement unless it were made public. He promised, however, to reflect on the matter during the holidays. When they met again in September, Cambon explained that the removal of the French warships to the Mediterranean was a temporary step connected with the manœuvres. It could not be definitive till France knew where we stood. When he produced a brief formula of consultation, Grey reiterated that consultation would take place in any case if either Power feared attack. Cambon agreed, but added that there was no written understanding. Grey sent the formula to the Prime Minister, who described it as almost a platitude.

Grey had not the slightest intention of changing the basis of Anglo-French relations, still less of secretly committing the country to take part in a continental war. But since the French were anxious for a written promise of consultation in the event of danger, he consented to put on paper what he described to Cambon as the actual facts of the situation in a letter approved by the Cabinet. At the request of Poincaré a sentence was added at the end. "If these measures involved action, the plans of the General Staffs would at once be taken into consideration, and the Governments would then decide what effect should be given to them." The letter embodied the three points which, in Grey's view, described the situation—that the experts had consulted, that their consultations did not bind the Governments to action, and that the Governments should consult one another if danger arose. Cambon's letter was virtually identical. The documents were unknown to the British public till they were revealed in the historic speech of August 3, 1914, though the German Government learned of them in the spring of that year.<sup>1</sup>

Grey's letter was not designed to extend British obligations. To some of his colleagues indeed it seemed to limit them by the declaration that the Governments retained complete freedom of action. From the French point of view, on the other hand, it registered a welcome though limited advance.<sup>2</sup> Believing in the value of written formulas, they were as anxious to secure a documentary promise of consultation as they had been to prevent a documentary pledge of non-aggression to Germany. They remembered that the Franco-Russian alliance

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXI, 544.

<sup>2</sup> For Paul Cambon's reflections *u. D.D.F.* IV, 318-322. He believed that Lansdowne would have been willing to go further.

had emerged from the formula of consultation in 1891. The expectation of support increased, and there was no longer any regional limitation stated or implied. A few days later Sir Henry Wilson, Director of Military Operations, visited Paris. His previous visits, he informed General Castelnau, had been on his own initiative: this time he had come with the assent of Grey.<sup>1</sup> A naval agreement signed by the British and French Admirals commanding in the Far East on January 27, 1913, was followed by elaborate plans for co-operation in the Channel and the Mediterranean in the event of the two countries being at war with Germany.<sup>2</sup> In order to emphasise their unofficial character, no signatures were attached to the documents dated February 10, 1913.

### XIII

When the Reval visit was returned in August 1909, Grey discussed current issues with the Tsar and Iswolsky in a friendly way, but no advance towards a closer partnership was made. Every one was anxious for a breathing-space after the Bosnian turmoil, and as Aehrenthal now became a champion of the *status quo* Grey's relations with the Ballplatz quickly improved. "Aehrenthal may rely on my not making any mischief in the Near East", he wrote to Cartwright in September 1910; and at the opening of 1911 he spoke to Mensdorff in optimistic tones. Since France had reached an understanding with Germany about Morocco and the annexation of Bosnia had been recognised, he saw no cause of trouble between the Great Powers. The friendly meeting between the Tsar and the Kaiser at Potsdam in November 1910 seemed to emphasise the *détente*. "I am delighted that Russia should be on the best terms with Germany", he wrote, "so long as that is not allowed to make a breach between her and us."

While the Russo-German *détente* and the lull in the Balkans diminished immediate anxieties in Eastern Europe, the Persian question loomed up again.<sup>3</sup> The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 had mapped out zones of influence without defining permissible activities. Persian finances had become so tangled and the tradition of corruption was so firmly entrenched that the wiser heads realised the necessity of foreign advisers.

<sup>1</sup> D.D.F. V, 65.

<sup>2</sup> D.D.F. V, 385-9, 483-90; VII, 489.

<sup>3</sup> G. and T. X, Part I, ch. 90. Shuster has told his thrilling story in *The Strangling of Persia*.

With the appointment of an American expert as Treasurer General in February 1911, a new chapter opened not only in the fortunes of an Asiatic state but in the story of Anglo-Russian relations. Shuster quickly earned the confidence of the Persian Government, which gave him *carte blanche*. On the ground that he was responsible to his employers alone he omitted to call on the British and Russian Ministers, and ignored the claims of Russia to a large measure of political control within her sphere. Grey shared the sympathy of his countrymen for Persia's efforts at reform; he knew that finance was the key to the situation, and he was convinced of the ability of the Treasurer General. On the other hand he resented his studied indifference to Russian sentiment and interests. "In our view", he telegraphed to the British Minister on July 13 in reference to a dispute with the Belgian head of the Customs, whose Russian sympathies were well known, "Treasurer must have executive power if any benefit is to accrue from his presence at Teheran (though this question need not be raised); but if Russia is not consulted she can make his position impossible."

The smouldering conflict burst into flame when Shuster offered the command of a Treasury Gendarmerie to Major Stokes, an officer in the British army who spoke Persian and who, he believed, was the most suitable person to gather in the revenue. Since, however, the larger part of the population lived in the Russian zone, the Russian Government hotly protested. Grey explained that we could not interfere, though, if Stokes entered the service of Persia, he would have to resign his commission in the British army. Shuster was acting without any political motive. He was apparently a very good, businesslike man, and he might throw up his post if we interfered, and declare that the British Government had made the regeneration of Persia impossible. On the other hand we could not object if Russia also claimed some appointment ensuring that her interests in the frontier region should not be overlooked. The tangle could not be undone by the expedient of Major Stokes' resignation from the British army, for Russia objected to any Englishman controlling military forces in her zone. Without openly protesting against the appointment, Grey reminded the Persian Government that, if he were employed in military operations, it might provide excuse for Russian officers taking active part on the other side.

Grey had now adopted the Russian standpoint, which he

regarded as justified by the spirit if not the letter of the Convention of 1907. Stokes was informed that Russia was as much within her right in resisting his employment in the north as we should be in opposing the employment of Russians to control trade routes in the south. He was annoyed that he had not been consulted before the offer was made, but he also complained that Russian opinion was needlessly sensitive. "If I had been equally exacting about the action of Colonel Liakhoff in past years and the continued presence of Russian troops in Northern Persia, good understanding between two countries would have been over long ago." He had never spoken so sharply, yet he was chained to Russia by his fear of the German fleet. He desired the welfare of Persia as much as his Radical critics, and he shared their belief that Shuster was the man for the job. But the smaller issue was dwarfed by the larger, and Stokes was forbidden to resign his post in the Indian army. "You should tell Shuster", he telegraphed, "that we appreciate his work and his single-minded motives and are sorry not to be able to do anything that he wishes." Grey's annoyance was increased when Kokovtsoff complained that the Anglo-Russian entente had not been working satisfactorily, and he sent a spirited rejoinder. Throughout the Persian difficulties the British Government had acted in loyal co-operation with Russia, even when its action had been exposed to criticism in Parliament and outside. The Anglo-Russian entente was never more unpopular in England than in the autumn of 1911. How uncomfortable Grey felt at the humiliating part he was compelled to play by considerations of the balance of power was not realised at the time, for in his public utterances he always put the best face he could on Russian Imperialism.

No sooner was the Stokes incident out of the way than a graver issue emerged. On October 19 the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs announced that Russia might have to occupy the northern provinces, mainly on the ground that Shuster's attempts to control the administration were incompatible with her interests. "This is very tiresome and very serious", minuted Grey, who warned Benckendorff that an occupation of Northern Persia or even a military expedition would involve a revision of the Anglo-Russian agreement. To avert such a calamity he was prepared to pay a high price. If Russia demanded the dismissal of Shuster, we should not object. When the latter's gendarmes proceeded to occupy the

estate of a highly placed partisan of the ex-Shah as a penalty for non-payment of taxes, St. Petersburg demanded withdrawal and apology. Grey advised Persia to yield. The publication in *The Times* of a shrill indictment of Russia by Shuster destroyed any lingering sympathy with the American crusader which he still retained, but in no way diminished his dislike of an occupation of the capital. Russian troops were at Resht, and he wired that a renewed ultimatum could not be justified by anything that had happened. He also spoke very seriously to Benckendorff, whose despatches reflect the growing anxieties of the Foreign Secretary. If Russia pressed too hard, he might have to discuss how far the principle of the Anglo-Russian agreement was impaired; for the independence and integrity of Persia were the foundation of the pact.<sup>1</sup>

Warnings produced little effect. Russia proceeded to formulate her demands at Teheran under three heads—the dismissal of Shuster, a promise not to employ foreigners without the consent of the British and Russian Legations, and payment of the expenses of the troops. Grey advised acceptance as the only alternative to a Russian advance, though he knew that an indemnity could never be paid. He confessed to the House of Commons that the situation necessitated serious discussions with St. Petersburg, for he was now thoroughly alarmed. “It is very important that Russians should not occupy Teheran except in last resort”, he telegraphed to Buchanan, “and should not put forward new demands of a more far-reaching nature. . . . It would be most deplorable if Russian Government without realising the risk forced the larger question upon us by making co-operation in Persia impossible.” Benckendorff uttered similar warnings, and explained that the fall of Grey would involve the fall of his system.\*

Russian policy throughout the crisis had been directed by Neratoff owing to the long illness of his chief. Sazonoff's restoration to health was welcomed by Grey, who sent him a Memorandum with six points dated December 8. A Persian Government should be established which would pay higher regard to British and Russian interests. The British Government could never recognise the restoration of the ex-Shah. The British and Russian Ministers at Teheran should agree on a successor to Shuster. When the Russian demands had been accepted, a joint loan should be made. The demand for an

<sup>1</sup> Benckendorff, II, 189-193.

\* Benckendorff, II, 251-6.



indemnity should be dropped. Finally, when the Russian demands were complied with and order in North Persia was restored, the occupation of territory should cease. Sazonoff expressed himself as in general agreement with this programme.

When Grey spoke on December 14, the situation was still critical, for the Russian demands had not been accepted in their entirety.<sup>1</sup> If the Persian question was rashly handled by either side, it might disappear behind larger issues. The Anglo-Russian Agreement never intended to destroy or diminish Russian influence in any part of Asia. It was already predominant in northern Persia. Equally there was no intention to impair the independence or integrity of the country, but we had not undertaken to protect them. Without the agreement there would have been much more interference. Russia had now put forward three demands. To that for the expulsion of Shuster he could not object. "I quite admit his ability and his good intentions, but you cannot have the spirit or intention of the Anglo-Russian Agreement upset and two great nations embroiled by the action of any individual, however well-intentioned." To the demand that the Persian Government should consult the British and Russian Legations on the appointment of foreign advisers it was equally impossible to object, since foreign advisers involved foreign influence. To the demand for an indemnity he was opposed, for Persia had no money to spare. After reading the six-point Memorandum he declared that the best hope for Persia lay in Anglo-Russian co-operation. We could not co-operate in any harsh or aggressive policy aimed at the destruction of her independence, but she must do her part by not injuring British or Russian interests. This adroit performance concealed his deep disapproval of Russian policy and his anxiety lest a valued partnership might collapse. While his Radical critics pleaded for a fair deal for Persia, the Foreign Secretary's eyes were riveted on Berlin.

A few days later the Persian Government accepted the Russian demands, and Shuster left the country which he had gallantly but somewhat tactlessly endeavoured to serve. The crisis was over, but it left a bitter taste in the mouth. "English opinion is beginning to turn towards us again", remarked Metternich to his Russian colleague; and Benckendorff confessed that it was true. There was a strong feeling in England, wrote Grey to Buchanan, that the Russians had pressed the

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches*, 172-84.

Persians too hard. "Recent events have made people here feel that Russian methods are not our methods, and even those people who sincerely desire to be on good terms with Russia shrink from being committed to co-operation that might imply responsibility for Russian action." Though Grey had been happy to sponge the slate in 1907, the resultant diplomatic partnership was not an unmixed satisfaction to him or anybody else.

#### XIV

The second half of 1911 was an anxious period. France and Germany were sparring about Morocco, Russia was trampling on Persia, and at the end of September Italy seized Tripoli.<sup>1</sup> On July 28 the Italian Ambassador in London complained of the Turkish attitude towards Italian enterprise in Tripoli, and added that his chief might be obliged to act. To this vague intimation Grey replied that in view of our excellent relations he desired to sympathise with Italy. If the Italians were really being unjustly treated in the economic field, and should their hand be forced, he would if necessary tell the Turkish Government that it could not expect anything else. The brief report suggests that he took care neither to ask for details nor to raise a warning voice. Two months later, in a private letter to Nicolson of September 19, he explained the reason of his neutrality. "It will be tiresome if Italy embarks on an aggressive policy and the Turks appeal to us. If the Turks do this, I think we must refer them to Germany and Austria as being allies of Italy. It is most important that neither we nor France should side against Italy now." This was pure *Realpolitik*. When Austria proclaimed the annexation of Bosnia, which she had occupied with the consent of the Powers and administered for thirty years, he denounced the offence. When Italy launched an ultimatum with a time-limit of twenty-four hours, followed by the seizure of Tripoli, a far grosser breach, not of law but of morality, provoked no rebuke. The one was a change in form, the latter a change in fact. She had been enticed away from the Central Powers, and she must not be driven back into their camp. Grey, like other people, applied different standards to different countries according to their political affiliations.

When the Italian Ambassador presented a statement of

<sup>1</sup>G. and T. IX, Part I, ch. 74.

grievances against Turkey, Grey replied that the forcible annexation of Tripoli was an extreme step which he had never expected, and which might have indirect consequences very embarrassing to other Powers, including ourselves, who had so many Mohammedan subjects. He hoped therefore that affairs would be conducted with the minimum of embarrassment. A day or two later he told the Ambassador that it had been a great shock, and that, but for our strong friendship for Italy, the comments of the press would have been very much worse. When Turkey asked for mediation at Rome, he replied that it would be useless. Since he could not stop the war, he was determined not to quarrel with either side. As in the case of Russia, he said a good deal more in private than his critics were aware. The Italians had been very foolish in putting out their foot so far, he wrote to our Ambassador in Rome after annexation was proclaimed on November 6. They had a fair case for squeezing guarantees for their economic interests and for the reversion of the country. They could have got all that by this time, and come well out of the whole business. Except that Egypt should be unaffected and the Dardanelles kept open, we had no direct interests to defend. Of all the Great Powers of Europe, England took the least active part in the diplomatic exchanges of the Tripoli war. Since neither side could strike a mortal blow, the conflict drifted on till the outbreak of the Balkan war a year later compelled Turkey to recognise her loss.

The seizure of Tripoli, like the annexation of Bosnia, was a greater blow to the prestige than to the material interests of Turkey, and its most damaging result was the encouragement of Balkan ambitions. The Albanian rising in 1911 showed that the new regime at Constantinople was as incapable of contenting its subjects as the old, and by the summer of 1912 it was an open secret that Sofia and Belgrade were in touch.<sup>1</sup> When the Austrian Ambassador asked for an opinion before leaving for his holiday, Grey replied that he desired the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Balkans, the only danger to which seemed to lie in the internal situation of Turkey. If it was disturbed, he hoped that the Powers most interested in the Balkans would not quarrel with each other. Berchtold, who was equally anxious to avoid complications, invited the Powers on August 13 to exchange views on the situation, and to encourage the Turkish Government to grant reforms.<sup>2</sup> Grey welcomed a discussion but awaited details. On Sep-

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. IX*, Part I, chs. 75 and 76.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* ch. 77.

tember to a further communication stated that Berchtold's one object was the maintenance of the *status quo*. Turkey had promised to extend the Albanian reforms to the Christian races of European Turkey, and she should be encouraged by the Powers acting individually. Certain concrete reforms were mentioned as illustrations. As Berchtold merely proposed moral support for Turkey, Grey expressed a friendly wish that Vienna should keep in close touch with St. Petersburg. The move came too late to influence events; for a Balkan League had been created under Russian patronage, and its members were straining at the leash.

Grey could do nothing to avert the conflict, and his conversations with Sazonoff at Balmoral at the end of September left the situation unchanged.<sup>1</sup> The visitor was alarmed at the blaze he had rashly helped to kindle. Instead of pressing us to take a vigorous anti-Turkish line, as Grey had feared, he urged strong pressure on the Balkan states to keep the peace. His great fear was that, if war broke out, Austria might act. What, he asked, could the British fleet do to help Russia if she were involved with Germany through her alliance with France? That, replied Grey, would depend on how the conflict came about. We could not join in a war of aggression or encirclement. If, however, Germany was led by her great strength to attempt to crush France, we were unlikely to stand aside. We had declined a promise of neutrality. If we intervened, our fleet would do its best in the North Sea, and, by its superiority over the German fleet, would free the French navy for the Mediterranean. Grey's attitude and declarations never changed—no support for aggression, but almost certainly assistance if France were attacked.

On October 7, after his return from Balmoral, Grey sent for Kühlmann to report on his conversations with Sazonoff.<sup>2</sup> The chief topic, he remarked, had been Persia. The prospects of Austro-Russian co-operation in the Balkans were good, and Russia did not dream of fishing in troubled waters. "I had the impression", concluded Kühlmann's telegram, "that Sir E. Grey attaches the greatest importance to keeping in touch with us." At their next conversation, on October 14, in discussing the coming war, the Foreign Secretary declared that throughout he had had no other object than to foster unity among the Powers, and that he would always be ready to associate himself with any step which appeared likely to

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* IX, Part I, ch. 78.

<sup>2</sup> *G.P.* XXXIII, 175-6, 221-2.

strengthen the Concert. He seemed disappointed that no response to his friendly utterance of the previous week had come from Berlin.

On the evening of the same day a far more remarkable conversation took place between Grey's trusted Private Secretary and the German Chargé at dinner.<sup>1</sup> His chief, began Tyrrell, wished to supplement his oral declarations. He was not sure if his words on October 7 had been fully understood in Berlin. As a mark of confidence he had informed the German representative of the conversations with Sazonoff before anyone else, and had expressed his wish for intimate political co-operation. He believed that the psychological moment to reach a trustful political relationship had arrived. He was heartily tired of the long friction, and wished in all sincerity to hold out the hand of warm and lasting reconciliation. He offered the olive-branch of peace. The present crisis appeared to him particularly suitable for intimate diplomatic co-operation, since English and German interests were identical. England sought no political advantage from the Balkan conflict, merely its localisation. The best method was for England and Germany to reach agreement by confidential exchanges, and then to appear before Europe hand in hand. Their counsels would have irresistible weight. To facilitate the exchange of views he would reveal his ideas on the course of the crisis. The Powers could only intervene after the first great battle. The Balkan states should, if possible, secure no territorial gains. In Macedonia radical reforms should be carried out under the sovereignty of the Sultan, Austria and Russia taking the lead. If intimacy were established through co-operation in a difficult time, agreement could be reached on all political wishes and interests. He was ready to go very far indeed, and regarded co-operation in China, Persia, Turkey and Africa as promising. He had in mind an important and indeed decisive step, and hoped it would be so understood in Berlin.

In reporting these declarations, so much more warmly phrased than ever before, Kühlmann added some reflections of his own. Grey's attitude was the consummation of a long process of development. The system of ententes, on which England's foreign policy was built, had begun to show cracks. Anglo-Russian relations had cooled owing to differences about Persia. The slow change from the orientation associated with

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIII, 228-237.

the name of King Edward had begun with the accession of King George. The Agadir crisis interrupted the rapprochement, but the very extremity of the danger had produced an eager desire for a new system in which Germany should have her proper place. A psychological moment of the first importance had arrived. Such an initiative was difficult for a sensitive and reserved man like Grey to make. To leave it without response would cause mortal offence. Kühlmann's sense of urgency was by no means shared by his chief. Grey, replied Kiderlen, talked of open co-operation with Germany, yet he chose this private channel. Again, in asking for Germany's views he had not revealed his own. Kühlmann should not be quite so optimistic. He should tell Grey that Germany was willing to go with England hand in hand on two conditions—that the negotiations should be absolutely secret, and that the result, in the event of agreement, should be made known. Moreover the two Powers would have to agree not to thwart each other in other quarters, especially where they had no vital interests but only desired to render service to a third party. When Kühlmann carried out his instructions on October 25, Grey expressed his satisfaction at the response, and invited him to visit him as often as possible. No further steps arising out of this approach appear to have been taken. Owing to the grouping of the Powers the wholesale reconciliation outlined by Tyrrell was impracticable; yet the two Governments collaborated throughout the Balkan wars with a confidence and cordiality which few could have dared to hope only a year after Agadir.

The storm burst on October 8, when Montenegro, quickly followed by the other Balkan states, declared war. Grey's loyalty, reported Mensdorff, was beyond doubt.<sup>1</sup> "I can only pray that you will not fall out," he remarked in reference to Austria and Russia. Foreseeing as little as anyone the sensational victories of the League, he observed to Benckendorff that real reform in Macedonia must be part of any settlement.<sup>2</sup> Our immediate interest was to prevent the closing of the Straits, but we only contemplated diplomatic action. Tortured by the possibility of a defeat for his *protégés*, Sazonoff hoped that he could count on France and England to support any attempt at mediation, since, if things turned out badly for Bulgaria, Russia might have to mobilise. If the two Powers failed Russia when the crisis came, the Triple Entente would

<sup>1</sup> A. IV, 606-9.

<sup>2</sup> G. and T. IX, Part II, ch. 79.

collapse. Grey replied by defining his own standpoint. "I am resolved that the outcome of the war must be to establish something in Macedonia that will prevent the recurrence of the state of things that existed under Abdul Hamid and the Committee régime that followed." If Sazonoff would draft a scheme of reform, he would gladly suggest mediation whenever the Powers seemed likely to concur. Despite his caution, Benckendorff reported that he was now ready for greater sacrifices at Turkey's expense.<sup>1</sup>

Russia and Austria should lead the Concert, remarked Grey to the German Chargé on October 25, and the territorial *status quo* should be maintained as far as possible.<sup>2</sup> If the Coalition won, inquired Kühlmann, what did Grey suggest? Everything, was the reply, would depend on Russia, Austria and Roumania. The Powers should be ready to mediate, and for this purpose Russia and Austria should co-operate. If the Turks collapsed, they should place the settlement in the hands of the Powers. Three days later, when the victory of the Allies seemed increasingly probable, Grey explained his views to Kühlmann in more detail. If the Turks won they should recover no territory, and new arrangements should be made for their Christian subjects. If the Allies were victorious, they should retain their conquests with the exception of Constantinople. Our modest task was to keep the Concert alive, and to play a mediator's part when opportunity arose. When pressed by Russia to say what England would do if Austria attacked Serbia, he declined to give a reply in advance, since he did not know what the other Powers would do.

Throughout November, while making no attempt to take the lead, Grey continued his efforts to localise and shorten the conflict. The Powers, in his opinion, should not at that stage deal with the details of the final settlement, for it was important that the distance between the two European groups should not be increased. When the lively and hospitable Lichnowsky, the new German Ambassador, took up his duties in London, he was warmly welcomed both in official and unofficial circles; but in a conversation on November 27 Grey explained how dangerous the situation had become.<sup>3</sup> We were neither for nor against a Servian port on the Adriatic, and we did not think it worth a war. Yet we realised that if Russia and Austria did go to war about it, in fact if any two Great Powers

<sup>1</sup> Benckendorff, II, 454-9.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* 417-21.

<sup>3</sup> G.P. XXXIII, 248-7 and 259-60.

went to war, there was not one of us who might not be drawn in. That was why we were so anxious to keep the peace. According to Benckendorff this message, however vague and friendly in form, was due to his suggestion, and was intended as a warning to Berlin not to rely too much on British neutrality.

A second hint was conveyed a week later. On December 2 Kiderlen paid tribute in the Reichstag to the particularly confidential relations between Germany and England during the Balkan crisis.<sup>1</sup> Grey expressed his keen satisfaction to Lichnowsky, but added that the Chancellor's speech of the same day caused him some alarm. The latter's promise of support to Austria if attacked while pursuing her interests seemed like a blank cheque, would stiffen her attitude, and would endanger the policy hitherto pursued by England and Germany of preserving peace and moderating both sides. He was most anxious to avoid a repetition of 1909, for he was convinced that Russia could not climb down again. Everything depended on keeping the question of a Servian port from coming to a head. If a European war arose from an Austrian attack on Servia and a consequential Russian invasion of Galicia, followed by Germany coming to the assistance of her ally, France would be dragged in and the further consequences were unpredictable. Here, concluded Lichnowsky's telegram, was a second clear warning. Though England had no secret agreements with France, it was her vital interest to prevent the total overthrow of France by Germany, and she would inevitably intervene. Nobody dreamed of compelling Russia to climb down, wired Kiderlen in reply. Austria had shown great patience, and Russia ought not to hinder her in the defence of her existence and prestige.

Lichnowsky returned to the charge in a despatch of December 9, summarising the impressions of his new post.<sup>2</sup> The British people, like the British Government, desired good relations with Germany. Grey's chief wish in his whole policy, and particularly in the delicate questions of the hour, was to maintain peace and to go hand in hand with Germany in all important issues. He would deplore nothing more than an aggravation of antagonisms which could only be overcome through the moral defeat of one or other party. For this reason he had proposed that the questions should be dealt with not singly but as parts of a whole. "We must reckon with the

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIII, 451-3.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* 463-5.



fact that England's policy towards us is pacific and friendly, but that no British Government could regard a fresh weakening of France as compatible with the vital interests of the country: Neither secret agreements, nor intrigues of Edward VII, nor the aftermath of the Morocco difficulties are the cause of this attitude, but the calculation that, after a second collapse of France as in 1870, the British people would find itself confronted with a single overmastering Continental Power, and that this danger must under all circumstances be avoided." Though the Ambassador had only been a few weeks at his post, he had realised that the key to British policy was the Balance of Power. Mensdorff, with his longer experience, had made the same discovery. England, he reported, desired the preservation of peace and the co-operation of the diplomatic groups, but in the event of a general conflagration she would not be able to stand aside.<sup>1</sup> She could not allow France to be destroyed. "The maintenance of a strong France is and remains an axiom of all parties, and we must never forget it."

At the end of November, after the defeat of the Turks, Sazonoff proposed to the French Government a Conference of the six Ambassadors at Paris to map out a settlement. Poincaré transferred the initiative to Grey, who approved the idea and proceeded to consult Berlin. Both Governments, began the *Aide-Mémoire* dated November 29, desired to preserve peace, and neither regarded the question of a Serb port as a sufficient reason for war between the Powers. If, however, two Great Powers went to war, none of the others could be sure of not being drawn into it. The military precautions of Austria and Russia were causing increasing anxiety. How would the German Government view a Conference of the Ambassadors, say at Paris, to discuss three points? I. How far were the Balkan allies free to change the map? II. On what questions must the Great Powers have their say? Assuming that the Straits were not claimed, the chief points seemed to be Albania, the access of Servia to the Adriatic, and the Aegean islands. III. What arrangements on these three problems would the Powers accept? If Kiderlen approved, would he sound Austria? The other three Powers, Grey believed, would agree. While a formal Conference might reveal irreconcilable differences between Austria and Russia, the risk would be minimised by informal consultations of the Ambassadors. Austria approved, and, owing to the unpopularity of Iswolsky

<sup>1</sup> A. V., 46-8, December 6.

with the Central Powers, London was selected for the meetings. At this moment Grey was the most trusted statesman in Europe.

After eight weeks of conflict an armistice was concluded on December 4, though Greece declined to suspend military operations. Interest shifted from the Balkans to London, and Grey's responsibilities increased.<sup>1</sup> The conversations, he felt, should be as informal as possible; if they went well, they might be followed by a formal Conference elsewhere. So little did he measure the difficulties that he spoke hopefully of giving Europe a Christmas present of peace. In conversation with the Swiss Minister he described a general war as a rather remote contingency. Serbia, he believed, did not intend to provoke Austria, and Austria had been very patient. To the German Ambassador, who spoke as if we stood outside the groups, he replied that, though diplomatic groups existed, they were not in opposing camps. Germany, for instance, was exercising a moderating influence among her friends, and we were doing the same with ours. Germany, France and England were all in the same position in the Balkan question. He was anxious for the Ambassadorial conversations to begin, for an untoward incident between Austria and Serbia would be less likely to occur and less dangerous if it did. Lichnowsky reported that he was in good spirits.

On December 16 the first meeting of the Peace Conference in London was opened by Grey; but, apart from giving counsels of moderation when his advice was sought by the negotiators, he took no part in the discussions. On the following day the Ambassadors met at the Foreign Office for the first of what he termed *réunions*. The proceedings were informal and a friendly atmosphere prevailed throughout, but the complications and perils of the Eastern Question were almost infinite. In Grey's expressive phrase they were sitting on a powder magazine. The problem of Albania, the first topic to be discussed, involved not only the vexed issue of Serbia's access to the sea but the frontiers of the new state, in other words the territorial claims of Montenegro, Serbia and Greece. Aiming throughout at a balanced settlement, the Foreign Secretary threw his weight sometimes on the Austrian, sometimes on the Russo-Serb side. At this early stage Austria's military preparations were his chief anxiety. It was no easy task to combine the maintenance of the Triple Entente with his duties as "honest broker", but it was generally agreed that no one

<sup>1</sup> G. and T. IX, Part II ch. 80.

could have steered the conversations with such judgment and tact. Lichnowsky's despatches were full of his praises, and Benckendorff was equally satisfied.

After prolonged negotiations and as a result of Enver's seizure of power on January 23, 1913, Turkey refused the terms demanded by the allies, and the second Balkan war began.<sup>1</sup> When the Turkish delegates urged that the Balkan states should not be allowed to disturb the tranquillity of Europe indefinitely, Grey replied that the idea of the Powers was to preserve it by remaining neutral themselves, and there was no chance of their intervening before the cession of Adrianople. The resumption of hostilities made little difference to the Conference, which dealt with problems beyond the competence of the belligerents. The greatest danger to European peace during the winter months, namely the military preparations of Austria and Russia, was diminished when Francis Joseph sent a special envoy with a reassuring letter to the Tsar.

The Albanian problem grew more intractable the more it was discussed. Austria, supported by Italy, was resolved to prevent a Servian port on the Adriatic, and strove for an Albania large enough to live. Scutari had not yet fallen; but although it was besieged and claimed by the Montenegrins, its Albanian character was incontestable, and its inclusion in the new state was reluctantly accepted by Russia. Having yielded on the Servian port and Scutari, Sazonoff fought all the harder to narrow the eastern frontier, and it was on the allocation of Djakova and Dibra that the peril of war for the first time came clearly within sight. Appealed to by both sides, Grey told Mensdorff that Russia could not give way on all the three points of Scutari, Djakova and Dibra. If a deadlock occurred he would propose a Commission of Inquiry. There was ominous talk in Vienna and St. Petersburg about their "last word" on two little towns of which few people had ever heard.

At this moment Sazonoff sounded Buchanan on our attitude. If war broke out between Russia and Austria, answered Grey, he would try to secure that Germany, France and Great Britain would stand aside. "If this failed, I cannot say what would happen. It seems unreasonable and intolerable that the greater part of Europe should be involved in war for a dispute about one or two towns on the Albanian frontier." Yet for some weeks it appeared not improbable. On February 20

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. ibid.* ch. 81.

Austria offered to concede Dibra if the rest of her line were accepted, but Mensdorff was instructed not to conceal the gravity of the situation. Though continuing to argue that Austria, having got her way on the Adriatic port and Scutari, ought to cede both places, Grey believed that nothing more could be obtained from Vienna, and expressed his opinion that for Russia to hold out for Djakova as well meant the collapse of the Conference. Russia was equally unyielding, and Grey declined to press her where he believed her in the right. His own efforts to secure a settlement were very nearly exhausted, he telegraphed to Goschen on February 23. "We have so nearly reached a settlement; and yet without Djakova being ceded to Servia a settlement becomes impossible." The outlook was dark, for Germany, having urged her ally to yield on Dibra, could invite no further sacrifice. To ease the situation Grey invited Russia to consider an international commission to examine the question of Djakova, but Sazonoff was unwilling to leave the decision in such hands. On March 15 Mensdorff announced that Austria would cease to attend the *réunions* unless Servia and Montenegro were ordered to evacuate the territories allotted to Albania. This communication, replied Grey, tempted him to say that he could do no more, and that the *réunions* must cease; but the situation was too serious to decide in a hurry.

The problem was complicated by expectation of the fall of Scutari to Montenegrin and Servian attacks, which Grey feared might provoke an Austrian ultimatum to Cettinje. "If, when that crisis arises", he telegraphed, "Russia does not intend to give armed support to Montenegro, it would be very desirable that she should have made this known beforehand and not appear to take her decision under pressure of Austrian action. . . . This is a matter too delicate for me to make a suggestion to Minister for Foreign Affairs, for Russia's dignity is her own affair, and I do not suppose that under any circumstances a war about the Albanian frontier would be regarded as a British interest involving action on our part. It is therefore not our business to discuss contingencies beyond the reach of diplomacy, but you might as coming from yourself ask Minister for Foreign Affairs in conversation whether he has reviewed the situation that I foresee." Sazonoff declared that he could never consent to any isolated military action by Austria; and, till Djakova was allotted to Servia, he refused a binding pledge to give Scutari to Albania.

The tension was relaxed on March 21 when Austria yielded Djakova, on condition that the rest of the north-east frontier should follow her latest proposal and that the territories allotted to Albania should be evacuated by Serb and Montenegrin troops. Grey was delighted, but the relief was short-lived, for Austria proceeded to threaten unilateral action if Montenegro continued to defy the Powers. The best plan seemed a naval demonstration at Antivari, in which Grey was ready to take part, and the landing of an international force. Scutari now replaced Djakova as the apple of discord, for Russia, though reluctantly permitting the coercion of Montenegro, declined to participate.<sup>1</sup> It would be disastrous to let Montenegro defy the Powers, telegraphed Grey in an appeal to France to send a ship. If the demonstration failed, Italy and Austria would have to act alone. When France hung back, Grey was exasperated. He told the French and Russian Ambassadors that he could not send British ships without French or Russian participation, and thus appear alone as a partner with the Triple Alliance. If we stood aloof, we must not object to the action of others to secure respect for the Albanian agreement. That was the only honourable course. France finally concurred, and all the Powers except Russia consented to join in the demonstration.

At this moment Grey was cheered by Bethmann's public tribute to his services and the announcement that Germany would energetically co-operate in carrying out the Ambassadors' decision. He needed encouragement, for the sky was dark. If Scutari fell Austria would not allow Montenegro to keep it. But could Russia look on if Austria ejected the Montenegrins by force? The fall of the town on April 23 brought the crisis to a head. King Nicholas had grasped his prize. The excitement in Russia was growing, and Austria was straining at the leash. Grey implored the latter not to bolt. So long as Scutari was evacuated, a week or a month was of little importance. To Montenegro he pointed out that, if she evacuated the town, she would receive economic assistance; if she refused, she would be expelled and receive no compensation. Once again, when peace hung by a thread, the unexpected occurred, for on May 4 King Nicholas placed Scutari in the hands of the Powers. Grey told Mensdorff that he felt as if he had escaped from a nightmare.

When the belligerents made peace on May 30, he might well

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* ch. 82.

hope that the spectre of war had passed away. He was worn out by the incessant strain. He told Cambon that the *réunions* could not go on for ever, and that in July they would all need a holiday. He suggested that they should confine themselves to the southern frontier of Albania and the Aegean islands. These issues were also to prove more difficult than he anticipated, and when the holiday season arrived the discussions had hardly begun. Meanwhile a fresh anxiety arose from the quarrels of the victors over the spoils.<sup>1</sup>

"It is impossible", declared Grey in the House of Commons on June 12, "to express too strongly the feelings of disappointment and disapproval with which an outbreak of war between the Balkan States, so lately allies, would be regarded by public opinion generally. It would alienate all the sympathy in Europe which has hitherto been an important contributory factor in securing an attitude of neutrality and non-interference on the part of the Great Powers, and the Balkan States must themselves be aware that if they were to fight with each other respecting the fruits of victory they might risk what they have hitherto gained in the war with Turkey." Appeals proved fruitless, and on June 29 Bulgarian troops attacked Serbs and Greeks all along the line. Happily none of the Powers desired to intervene in defence of their interests or in support of Bulgaria, whose rash assault tempted Roumania and Turkey to enter the fray. Only when Adrianople was re-occupied was intervention considered. Russia favoured a naval demonstration, and Grey declared that he would join if the other Powers accepted the plan, though he doubted its efficacy. After the conclusion of peace at Bucharest on August 10 nothing more was heard of the matter. Ten months of fighting were at an end.

By this time Grey had had enough of *réunions*. On July 25 he informed the other Powers that he and his colleagues needed a holiday. Whether they should be resumed might be decided later. There was another reason for discontinuing the experiment. There had of late been a tendency to multiply details and points of form rather than of substance, and the facility with which matters could be raised encouraged this tendency. Henceforth questions should be dealt with through the ordinary channels. The story of an interesting experiment was summarised many years later by Grey himself.<sup>2</sup> "There was no formal finish; we were not photographed in a group—

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* ch. 83.

<sup>2</sup> *Twenty-Five Years*, I, 271-2.

we had no votes of thanks, no valedictory speeches ; we just left off meeting. We had not settled anything, not even all the details of Albanian boundaries, but we had served a useful purpose. We had been something to which point after point could be referred ; we had been a means of keeping all the six Powers in direct and friendly touch. The mere fact that we were in existence, and that we should have to be broken up before peace was broken, was in itself an appreciable barrier against war." He modestly omits all reference to his own part as a good European, the conductor of the orchestra, for which he deserved and received the gratitude of Europe. Nicolson was a confirmed Russophil, reported Mensdorff, but Grey was eminently impartial.<sup>1</sup> Every member of the Conference, echoed Lichnowsky, felt equal confidence in him.<sup>2</sup> It was the crowning moment of his career.

## XV

The Treaty of Bucharest brought the cessation of hostilities but little else. Bulgaria dreamed of vengeance, Servia of victory in a sterner strife. Now that Turkey had quitted Macedonia and Bulgaria lay prostrate, Austria alone stood in the way of Belgrade. Henceforth the Austro-Serb antagonism was the chief menace to European peace, for behind Servia stood Russia with her growing strength. The first alarm was sounded on October 18, 1913, when, after repeated warnings, Austria launched an ultimatum demanding the withdrawal of Serb troops from Albania. Grey had already advised evacuation at the earliest possible moment, but the peremptory procedure came as a shock. Unilateral action, he complained to Kühlmann, endangered the Concert. Servia obeyed and the danger passed as quickly as it arose, but the chronic tension between Vienna and Belgrade was increased. The incident emphasised the importance of finding a ruler for Albania, and the Prince of Wied, who made a very favourable impression on Grey, was chosen for the thankless task.

The problem of the southern frontier was connected with that of the Aegean islands, for it was hoped to balance the disappointment of Greek claims in the former against gains elsewhere. Their disposal proved unexpectedly difficult, since the demands of Italy and Greece had to be reconciled

<sup>1</sup> A. VI, 607-8, June 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Meine Londoner Mission*, in *Auf dem Wege zum Abgrund*, I, 104

with Turkey's desire to retain as many as possible.<sup>1</sup> Grey repeatedly expressed his hope that the Italian occupation should terminate in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne. In other matters he contented himself with his customary rôle of honest broker. When Venizelos at the opening of 1914 proposed an Anglo-Greek entente to preserve the *status quo* in the Mediterranean, he cautiously replied that it was premature to consider a separate arrangement which would offend the susceptibilities of other Powers. No settlement had been reached at the outbreak of the world war.

Graver issues were raised in the winter of 1913 by the appointment of Liman von Sanders as head of a German military mission to Turkey.<sup>2</sup> When von der Goltz had been employed to reorganise the Turkish army after the Treaty of Berlin, Germany possessed no political influence at Constantinople, and the General held no command. The situation was now entirely different. During the later years of Abdul Hamid Germany ousted Russia from her position of predominance. The Baghdad railway was the symbol of a partnership which, so Russia feared, might extend beyond the economic field. The Bulgarian threat to Constantinople during the first Balkan war had created alarm, but the news that a German General was to command the Turkish army in the capital aroused consternation.

On November 27 Grey wired that he fully appreciated the feeling of the Russian Government. Germany could not justly object to other Powers demanding similar advantages, though it was difficult to find any consistent with the maintenance of Turkish independence. A few days later he sent a sharp warning to Turkey. "It would place the whole *corps diplomatique* at Constantinople in German power. The key of the Straits would practically be in German hands. The German General could take military measures that would impair the sovereignty of the Sultan. The equilibrium of the Powers would be broken, which is the guarantee of the existence of Turkey. For instance if Germany be given this preponderating position at Constantinople, other Powers will make similar demands to secure their own position in the Turkish dominions, and Turkey will be unable to refuse these demands on any ground of equity." The British, French and Russian Ambassadors should point this out to the Turkish Government. Grey hoped that this telegram would satisfy Sazonoff for the

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. X*, Part I, ch. 83.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T. X*, Part I, ch. 87.



present, but he explained that the German command, though sufficiently disagreeable for the other Powers, concerned Russia most of all. If the Turks had acted under German pressure, she should take the matter up at Berlin. His task was complicated by the fact that Admiral Limpus was not merely naval adviser but commander of the Turkish fleet, which provoked him to minute : " We must certainly go very carefully." Though pressed from St. Petersburg to join in a collective *démarche*, he contented himself with a verbal inquiry at Constantinople as to the powers of the Mission. The reply that the General would command the First Army Corps, but would have no authority over the Straits, removed another reason for vigorous protest.

Wishing to keep in touch with Berlin Grey told Lichnowsky that the Russians were more upset about the Mission than he had ever known them. They might require a corresponding Russian command in Armenia, or something of that kind which would inaugurate the break-up of the Turkish Empire. They were very sensitive about Constantinople. The Ambassador was pleased with the conversation and reported that Grey was unlikely to make difficulties for Germany. He differed from Sazonoff not only in his estimate of the importance of the question but on the method of dealing with it. Russia, he complained to Cambon, seemed to think that a protest might be made in Constantinople, and the matter be treated as a purely Turkish question ; but within forty-eight hours it would have become a German and European issue. If she were dissatisfied with the Turkish reply to inquiries, the issue should be discussed with Berlin before protests were made in Constantinople. The German Government, though not intransigent, found it difficult to climb down. Grey's position was most uncomfortable, for it was equally dangerous to support or to resist Russian demands. He declined Sazonoff's request for a *démarche* by the Triple Entente at Berlin, but he could not tell the Germans of his refusal. " I do not believe the thing is worth all the fuss that Sazonoff makes about it ", he wrote to Goschen ; " but as long as he does make a fuss it will be important and very embarrassing to us, for we cannot turn our back upon Russia." All he could do was to preach compromise at Berlin. The German command at Constantinople, he confided to Lichnowsky, caused him more anxiety than all other questions together. He believed the German Government really wished to find a solu-

tion. The Russians were getting very impatient, and would feel bound to take some compensatory action which might open up large issues. If the General's position could not be modified, perhaps it might be of limited duration.

At the end of January, 1914, Berlin gave way. Liman relinquished the command of the First Army Corps, though remaining in Turkey for the purposes of military reorganisation. The intrinsic importance of the incident, wrote Grey to Buchanan, had been very much exaggerated. Now that Germany had had a diplomatic set-back, Sazonoff ought to be satisfied. Though the danger of a collision had passed, the incident revealed the inflammability of Russian sentiment and was followed by a violent press feud. It also revealed Russian resentment at our lukewarm support. In a private letter of February 11 to his chief Benckendorff explained why Grey had not been able to do more.<sup>1</sup> Even Nicolson, who desired an alliance, confessed that it was impossible. Public opinion was opposed even to an alliance with France. Grey should not be discouraged, and reproaches were wounding. His aim was the same as that of Russia though his methods often differed, and he had no love for empty declarations. The British Government was a slow machine, but the control was good and there were sound elements in the Triple Entente.

A fortnight later Benckendorff added a few touches to the picture. He shared his chief's desire for an alliance: it was the natural conclusion of the entente. That was the general wish in British military and naval circles, and it was represented on the front benches and in the Foreign Office. "You will be surprised at my conviction that Grey would do it to-morrow if he could. But he belongs to the class of people who rarely speak about things till they are ripe." The difficulty was immense. A terrible insularity still remained. Englishmen would only wake up on the eve of a tremendous crisis. The situation could not be forced. Sazonoff was wrong to talk of the blindness of Grey. "The menace of German hegemony is always in his thoughts, and he anxiously follows its advance. Do not believe he is blind. Far from it! He seems much more irresolute than he is. . . . He feels very strongly that he is the pillar and the born champion of the entente to which his whole policy and his own future are welded. Reiterated reproaches about small misunderstandings would assuredly hurt his feelings. . . . That his party and his

<sup>1</sup> *Imperialismus*, I, 225-7.

utopias shackle him is clear, but there is also public opinion. What can he do without this support?" Unlike his chief, Benckendorff understood both the character of the Foreign Secretary and the ultimate sovereignty of the common man in a democratic community.

The approaching visit of King George to Paris provided Russia with the desired opportunity for drawing closer to England.<sup>1</sup> On April 3 the Tsar told Buchanan that he would like a defensive alliance, or at any rate an arrangement like that existing between England and France, agreeing what each country would do in certain eventualities. It would be useful to arrange for the co-operation of the fleets. Nicolson minuted that discussion on the French model between the naval staffs, without in any way binding the Governments, would have great advantages. Grey's reaction was more cautious. "If the French agreed we might let the Russians know what has passed between military and naval authorities on each side, but we had better postpone discussion of anything as long as we can." There was, however, no escape. On April 17 Nicolson was informed that Sazonoff has asked Doumergue, the Premier and Foreign Minister, to speak to Grey in Paris about a defensive alliance or a naval convention. "It is a very delicate matter", minuted Grey on Nicolson's report, "and I am glad to be warned, but it is possible that it is the French who have inspired the Russians with the idea. It is curious that the Russians should be suggesting more than the French have got from us."

For the first and last time Grey accompanied the Sovereign on a state visit abroad, and the intimacy of the Anglo-French entente was emphasised in every possible way. What the world could not know was that during the three crowded days, April 21-24, the Triple Entente was tightened up. The vital discussion between the two Foreign Ministers took place on April 24, in the presence of Paul Cambon and Tyrrell. According to the full report of Doumergue the Tangier statute, Mexico, Albania, Epirus, the Treaty of Bucharest, and Italy's retention of the Dodecanese were passed in review before the host led the conversation to the decisive point.<sup>2</sup>

*Doumergue*: Are you not struck by the present action of the Triple Alliance in the Mediterranean? Its plans are more ambitious than in the past. The Naval Staffs of the three

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. X*, Part II, chs. 97 and 98.

<sup>2</sup> *D.D.F. X*, 264-70. Abridged.

countries have probably had conversations. This activity and this policy deserve to be noted and if possible checkmated, for they may threaten the Mediterranean interests of us both. An excellent means of preventing Germany from keeping formidable naval forces there would be to attract her attention in the Baltic. The conditions of co-operation of the squadrons of the Triple Entente should be determined in time of peace. I do not dream of asking you to change the character of our agreements. We have confidence in the friendship of England, and I am sure she would not fail us in the hour of peril. I merely remark how abnormal it is that, while France already has naval arrangements with England and Russia, there is no co-ordination between the three. Is it not time to correct this anomaly, and could not England do with Russia what she has done with us?

*Grey* : As regards military co-operation we have done all we can with you.

*Doumergue* : Of course, and therefore I have only naval activity in mind. Your country and mine have envisaged the co-operation of our squadrons in the North Sea. That is no obstacle to co-operation with Russia in the Baltic. Indeed the latter is the logical consequence of the former.

*Grey* ; Very well, we might begin by telling Russia of the conversations between our General Staffs and then ask : What have you to say ?

*Doumergue* : I quite approve this procedure.

*Grey* : On returning home I will speak to Asquith and recommend this plan. As regards France no English Government, I assure you, would refuse military and naval aid if she were unjustly menaced and attacked. A Government which hesitated could not resist the pressure of public opinion. But with Russia it is quite different. With her size and her immense reserves of man power people believe that she could victoriously resist German aggression. We are less certain about France, and that is why England would intervene if she were the victim of unjust aggression.

*Doumergue* : I am touched by what you say. But I see in a rather closer rapprochement between England and Russia an importance which you also will recognise if you bear in mind all the efforts at seduction made by Germany and above all by the Kaiser. There is a pro-German party in Russia—Witte is a member—which favours an entente at Austria's expense. To counterbalance these efforts and to frustrate these blandish-

ments a closer solidarity of the Triple Entente seems to me necessary. If you converse with Russia, and if our three Naval General Staffs have joint discussions, Russia, finding herself tied more closely to us, would be better able to resist German approaches.

*Grey*: I realise all that, and I repeat: If my Government approves, we will tell St. Petersburg what exists between us and will ask the Russian Government what it proposes.

*Doumergue*: Do you not think that there might be an exchange of letters in which we would agree that, if one of the three countries found itself suddenly menaced, or if the general situation made it appear necessary, a conversation *à trois* would immediately take place?

*Grey*: I do not reject the idea. But we must proceed methodically. We could examine that after we have communicated to Russia our conversations relating to naval co-operation.

Grey's report is brief and colourless. Conversation between the Russian and British Naval Staffs, he observed, could not amount to much but it would be something. The same evening, after an official dinner, he explained to Poincaré and Doumergue the conditions under which British statesmen did their work. It was difficult to hold out to Russia any hopes of assistance. Whether we engaged in a Continental war would depend on public opinion when the moment came. If there were a really aggressive and menacing attack by Germany on France, it might possibly approve support. But it was unlikely that Germany would make such an attack on Russia; and even if she did, people would be inclined to say that Russia could take care of herself. Moreover the fact that she did not possess a free Government affected our attitude.

Grey attached comparatively little importance to the approach. "I could see little of any strategic necessity or value in the suggestion", he writes in his apologia.<sup>1</sup> "To my lay mind it seemed that, in a war against Germany, the Russian fleet would not get out of the Baltic and the British fleet would not get into it; but the difficulty of refusing was obvious. To refuse would offend Russia by giving the impression that she was not treated on equal terms with France; it might even give her the impression that, since we first agreed to military conversations with France, we had closed our minds against participation in a war. To give this impression might have

<sup>1</sup> *Twenty-Five Years*, I, 284-5.

unsettling consequences, as well as being untrue. On the other hand it was unthinkable that we should incur an obligation to Russia which we had refused to France. It was as impossible as ever to give any pledge that Britain would take part in a continental war." The Russians asked for it, he wrote, the French pressed it, and we saw no reason to refuse provided that the whole transaction was strictly within the limits laid down in the Grey-Cambon letters. It would indeed have been as difficult to decline the Russian suggestion in 1914 as it was to decline the French request in 1906. Yet the proviso that expert conversations left the discretion of the Governments unimpaired failed once again to prevent enhanced expectations of support. The preparation of detailed schemes of military and naval co-operation is a step of deeper psychological significance than Grey ever appeared to realise. Our partners in the Triple Entente were delighted at the readiness with which the British Government accepted their plan. England saw no need for an alliance, explained Benckendorff to his chief, but she realised that, if the worst occurred, she would none the less have to march.<sup>1</sup>

After securing the approval of the Cabinet Grey saw Benckendorff and Cambon together on May 19.<sup>2</sup> The Russian Ambassador was furnished with a copy of the Grey-Cambon letters, and the Russian Government, he was told, might be informed of what had passed between the French and British Naval Staffs. The British Government had no objection to a non-committal agreement between the Russian and British Naval Staffs. Benckendorff asked whether his Government should not also be informed of the conversations between the Military Staffs, and Cambon approved the suggestion. Grey saw no objection, but added that, as we knew nothing of the military arrangements between France and Russia, the matter should be dealt with in Paris rather than in London. In turning over the matter to the experts he believed that his part was done, and he never inquired at the Admiralty what occurred. He was also unaware of Benckendorff's report to his chief that the Triple Entente had at last become a reality. Cambon, he added, had helped with hands and feet.

The fact that discussions were taking place was betrayed by a member of the Russian Embassy, and was revealed by the *Berliner Tageblatt* at the instance of the Wilhelmstrasse. On June 11 Grey was asked two pointed questions in the House of

<sup>1</sup> *Imperialismus*, II, 353-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Imperialismus*, III, 21-2, 33-5.

Commons. Had any naval agreement recently been entered into between Russia and Great Britain? Had any negotiations with a view to a naval agreement recently taken place, or were they now pending? His reply, framed with the utmost care, began by quoting Asquith's declaration in 1913 that, if war arose between European Powers, there were no unpublished agreements which would restrict or hamper the freedom of the Government or Parliament to decide whether or not Great Britain should participate in a war. "No negotiations have since been concluded with any Power that would make the statement less true. No such negotiations are in progress, and none are likely to be entered upon, as far as I can judge. But if any agreement were to be concluded that made it necessary to withdraw or modify the Prime Minister's statement of last year, which I have quoted, it ought in my opinion to be, and I suppose that it would be, laid before Parliament." The statement, he confesses in his apologia, though true, did not answer the questions. It was the only occasion on which he deliberately misled his countrymen. Suspicious critics like Morel interpreted it as a denial of the rumoured negotiations, and were as relieved at the time as they were furious on discovering what had taken place. The least casuistical of statesmen cannot have been altogether happy. His case is that the question ought not to have been asked. "Parliament has an unqualified right to know of any agreement or arrangements that bind the country to action or restrain its freedom. But it cannot be told of military and naval measures to meet possible contingencies." Yet secrets leak out. It is an irony of history that the Germans knew what was concealed from ourselves.

On June 24, in the last of their conversations before the Serajevo tragedy, Grey explained to Lichnowsky our relations with France and Russia. There was no alliance, no agreement committing us to action. Yet the Ambassador must not think of the relations as less cordial and intimate than they really were. From time to time we talked as intimately as allies, but this intimacy was not used for aggression against Germany. France was most peacefully disposed, and Russia had no thought of attacking Germany. It was an optimistic reading of the European situation, which he described in less flattering terms to Benckendorff on the following day. Immense harm, he declared, was being done by the persistent reports of an Anglo-Russian naval agreement, and it was even assumed that

it included a bargain about the opening of the Straits. The rumours might lead to a new *Novelle* and impair our good relations with Germany, which had improved very much during the last Balkan crisis and which he wished to maintain.

While Germany's relations with France and Russia were deteriorating, the wire between London and Berlin was in relatively good repair. Since the search for a naval and neutrality agreement was abandoned in 1912, and the Churchill plan of a naval holiday was never taken very seriously, the two Governments undertook the more profitable discussion of their respective interests in the Portuguese colonies and the Baghdad railway. The former problem was complicated by treaty obligations.<sup>1</sup> It was materially and morally wrong, declared Grey, that the colonies should remain derelict: they ought to be developed. He would be only too glad if Portugal could be brought to see that it was to her interest, and that this could be done only through Great Britain and Germany. But there was our alliance, recently reaffirmed, and it would be dishonourable to exert pressure. Despite the delicacy of the situation, the revision of the spheres of influence under the secret treaty of 1898 was taken in hand, the burden of the negotiations being shared by Harcourt, the Colonial Secretary. Soveral, the Portuguese Minister, was told that the colonies could not remain forever undeveloped. The wise course for Portugal would be, on the firm understanding that Germany as well as Great Britain would respect her sovereignty to encourage British and German capital. The emphasis on Portuguese sovereignty was no more to the taste of the German negotiators than in 1898. The final aim, confessed Metternich, was the absorption of the colonies by Germany and England; and Lichnowsky complained that Grey seemed to assume the position of medical adviser, while Germany hoped to be the heir.

After more than a year of wearisome negotiations, in which three German Ambassadors, aided by Kühlmann, played their part, Grey and Lichnowsky initialled an agreement on August 13, 1913, England gaining on the east coast of Africa at the cost of sacrifices on the west. When Sazonoff expressed anxiety, Grey explained that the new agreement merely embodied a very slight revision of the spheres of interest. France too was displeased, and Cambon remarked that, if England and Germany ever obtained the enormous increases of territory

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. X*, Part II, ch. 95.



earmarked for them, France should receive compensation. Difficulties also arose with Germany, where the obligations of the Anglo-Portuguese alliance and its relation to the new treaty were imperfectly understood. Grey proposed the publication of the Anglo-German treaty of 1898 and the so-called Windsor treaty of 1899, and, when the public had had time to digest them, the revised agreement of 1913. The publication of the "Windsor" treaty was desired by Portugal but opposed by the German Government, which feared that it would make the Anglo-German agreement look like a scrap of paper. Grey on the other hand urged that, if the new agreement was to be signed and published the "Windsor" treaty must appear as well. So strong was the objection of Berlin that the agreement initialled in 1913 was never signed.

After the failure of the promising negotiations inaugurated by the Kaiser's visit to Windsor in 1907, the Baghdad railway problem, so far as the British Government was concerned, had been laid on the shelf. When, however, the Russo-German negotiations begun at Potsdam in 1910 removed the Russian veto, the road was open for a new advance.<sup>1</sup> In March 1911 Turkey made proposals concerning the section from Baghdad to the Persian Gulf, which were rejected on July 31 as insufficient for the protection of our interests. We had only two objects, explained Grey to the Dominion Premiers at the Imperial Conference on May 26, 1911.<sup>2</sup> The first was to secure fair treatment for British trade. The second was to preserve our strategic position and our prestige in the Persian Gulf. A revised Turkish scheme was presented in April 1912, which the British reply of July 18, 1912, accepted as a basis for discussion. Turkish negotiators are never in a hurry, and it was not until February 1913 that Hakki Pasha arrived in London to continue the discussions. After the usual series of drafts and counterdrafts an agreement was signed by Grey and Hakki on July 29, 1913, in which our main object, the safeguarding of the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf, was fully secured. In signing the document Grey expressed a hope that France and Germany would also agree about the Baghdad railway.

The next task was to make an arrangement between London and Berlin. A technical agreement concerning river transport

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. X*, Part II, chs. 91-4. The complicated story is summarised by Alwyn Parker, one of the negotiators, in the *Quarterly Review*, October 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T. VI*, 786-7.

was signed on February 23, 1914, by a representative of the Baghdad Railway Company and Lord Inchcape, the representative of British commercial interests; and a comprehensive Anglo-German Convention was initialled by Grey and Lichnowsky on June 15, 1914.

On June 29, the Foreign Secretary explained the situation to Parliament.<sup>1</sup> We had signed some agreements with Turkey and had initialled others with Turkey and Germany; but the latter category could not be signed till Germany and Turkey had completed their separate negotiations. Though we were not participating in the Baghdad railway, both Germany and Turkey agreed that it should not go beyond Basra without settling with us. This was an important advance, for the original concession included the right of Germany to reach the Gulf. We had stipulated for equal rights and equal rates, and two British Directors would see that the commerce of all nations was fairly treated. Secondly we had secured the recognition of the rights of the Lynch Company to continue running their steamers, and in a new Ottoman company we should have fifty per cent. of the shares and a casting vote. Thirdly a Turkish Commission would keep the Shatt-el-Arab fit for navigation. Fourthly, Turkey had recognised the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf. In return for these advantages, when all the other countries had concluded their arrangements with the Turkish Government, we should accept the increase of the Turkish tariff to fifteen per cent. The Turks needed more revenue if they were to reform their country, but we could not agree if the increased yield facilitated the continuation of a line to the Persian Gulf without our consent. This very disagreeable situation, which involved us in opposition to Germany, was now at an end. Unhappily Grey was speaking on the day after the Serajevo murders, and his labours, though he knew it not, were in vain.

The *détente* between London and Berlin was watched in Paris with suspicious eyes and in Central Europe with delusive hopes. Fundamentally nothing had changed, for the rival groups remained intact. During a private visit to King George in December 1912, at the height of the Balkan war, Prince Henry of Prussia asked point blank whether, in the event of Germany and Austria going to war with Russia and France, England would come to the assistance of the latter Powers.\* "I said undoubtedly yes under certain circum-

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches*, 283-7.

\* *G. and T. X*, Part II, 658-9.

stances", reported the King to Grey. "He professed surprise and regret, but did not ask what the certain circumstances were." The Foreign Secretary approved the reply, which the King himself, with considerable satisfaction, repeated to Cambon and Benckendorff. "Sir Edward Grey thinks that it would be dangerous and misleading to let the German Government be under the impression that under no circumstances would England come to the assistance of France and Russia if Germany and Austria went to war with them, and he thinks it very fortunate that Your Majesty was able to give an answer to Prince Henry that will prevent him from giving this impression at Berlin. Your Majesty's Government is not committed in the event of war, and the public opinion of this country is, so far as Sir Edward Grey can judge, very averse to a war arising out of a quarrel about Servia. But if Austria attacked Servia aggressively, and Germany attacked Russia if she came to the assistance of Servia and France were then involved, it might become necessary for England to fight; as the German Chancellor said that Germany would fight for the defence of her position in Europe and for the protection of her own future and security." They were prophetic words. A similar warning given to Lichnowsky by Haldane on the same day, was taken as seriously by the Kaiser as by the Ambassador.<sup>1</sup>

The British position was authoritatively though not exhaustively explained by the Prime Minister in answer to questions on March 24, 1913. "As has been repeatedly stated, this country is not under any obligation not public and known to Parliament which compels it to take part in any war. In other words, if war arises between European Powers, there are no unpublished agreements which will restrict or hamper the freedom of the Government or of Parliament to decide whether or not Great Britain should participate in such a war." There was nothing in this to hurt anyone's feelings, and, after playing his part as a good European during the Balkan crisis, Grey's stock stood high in Berlin. In October 1913 Kühlmann informed him of the Chancellor's hope that the frank communication which had kept Germany and England in touch with such good results would be maintained. The message produced a cordial response.

Grey took pains to render the King's visit to Paris in April 1914 as inoffensive as possible to Berlin. Doumergue's draft *communiqué* contained words which he declined to accept.

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIX, 119-125.

"En constatant les résultats de l'action concertée des deux Gouvernements Sir Edward Grey et M. Gaston Doumergue se sont tombés d'accord sur l'intérêt des Puissances de la Triple Entente à associer d'une façon de plus en plus intime leurs efforts en vue du maintien de l'équilibre européen et la paix." This phraseology, Grey pointed out, might suggest some new agreement and would cause considerable trouble in Europe. A more neutral sentence was substituted. "En constatant les résultats de la politique poursuivie par les deux Gouvernements avec le Gouvernement Impérial russe, Sir Edward Grey et M. Gaston Doumergue sont tombés d'accord sur la nécessité pour les trois Puissances de contribuer leurs constants efforts en vue du maintien de l'équilibre et la paix." On returning to London he told Lichnowsky that the mood of the French seemed very peaceful and unaggressive, and that this made their cordiality quite unembarrassing. The Ambassador reported that he was delighted with the visit.

Though Grey was anxious to spare the susceptibilities of Berlin, he realised that any approach to intimacy would be misconstrued in Paris and St. Petersburg. When a message reached Churchill through Cassel from Ballin that Tirpitz would like a talk, and the project was welcomed by the First Lord of the Admiralty, he advised caution. Preliminary discussion of the points at issue through the Naval Attachés should decide whether it would be profitable. "As to the personal visits to Kronstadt and Kiel", he wrote in a Memorandum on May 25, 1914, "I am most reluctant to stand in the way, but they will make a terrible splash in the European press, and give a significance to the cruise of the squadrons that is out of all proportion to anything that was contemplated when the cruises were planned." When Churchill replied that discussions would only be useful between Tirpitz and himself, the matter dropped. Grey was doubtless correct in his belief that the atmosphere was so charged with electricity that leading statesmen of opposing groups could not meet without arousing the suspicions of their friends. Perhaps a bolder spirit might have faced the risk. He was not a superman. Lloyd George, one of the harshest of his critics, complains that he lacked the quality of audacity which makes a great Minister. If this criterion is to be applied, we must admit that he was not a Canning, a Palmerston or a Disraeli.

## XVI

When the news of the Serajevo murders arrived on June 28, 1914, Grey telegraphed the sympathy of the British Government, and wrote a warmly phrased private letter to Mensdorff.<sup>1</sup> On July 6, after a visit to Berlin, Lichnowsky reported that Austria might take action against Servia, and that it would be difficult for Germany to hold her back. He hoped that we should use our influence at St. Petersburg. If trouble came, replied Grey, he would do his utmost to prevent a catastrophe. Two days later he told Benckendorff that the Austrian Government might be forced by public opinion to take some step against Servia, and urged Russia to assure Germany that no *coup* against her was being prepared. The thought of a general war made his hair stand up.<sup>2</sup> Next day, July 9, in a second conversation with Lichnowsky, he observed that, if Austria's action were kept within bounds, it would be comparatively easy to preach patience at St. Petersburg; but she might do something that would drive Russia to act. As in the Balkan crisis, he would do his utmost to preserve peace. On July 20 he telegraphed to Buchanan: "It would be very desirable that Austria and Russia should discuss things together if they become difficult." When Lichnowsky described the situation as very uncomfortable, he again observed that the more Austria could keep her demands within reasonable limits, and the stronger the justification she could produce for making any demand, the more chance there would be of smoothing things over. He hated the idea of war between any of the Great Powers, and that any of them should be dragged into a war by Servia would be detestable.

The second act of the drama opened on July 23, when Mensdorff reported privately what he would have to communicate officially on the morrow. Grey expressed his great regret that an ultimatum would be sent to Belgrade, since it might inflame Russian opinion. A time-limit should only be adopted after other means had failed. The possible consequences were terrible. If four Great Powers—say Austria, France, Russia and Germany—were engaged in war, a complete collapse of European credit and industry might occur.

<sup>1</sup> G. and T. XI. The most authoritative German criticisms of Grey's action on the eve of war are Jagow, *England u. der Kriegausbruch*; Oncken, *Greys Kampf um den Eintritt Englands in den Weltkrieg*, in *Nation u. Geschichte*, 449-514; and Montgelas, *The Foreign Policy of Sir E. Grey*.

<sup>2</sup> *Imperialismus*, IV, 141-4.

Irrespective of who were the victors, many things might be completely swept away. "He was cool and objective as ever", reported the Ambassador, "friendly and not without sympathy for us." Next day Mensdorff brought the ultimatum, which Grey described as the most formidable document he had ever seen addressed to an independent state. In view of its extraordinarily stiff character, he remarked to Lichnowsky, he felt quite helpless so far as Russia was concerned. The only chance was that Germany, Italy, France and ourselves should work jointly and simultaneously for moderation at Vienna and St. Petersburg if Austro-Russian relations became threatening. The immediate danger was that in a few hours Austria might invade Servia, and Russia be compelled by public opinion to intervene. Only Germany could counsel Austria not to precipitate events. Lichnowsky unofficially suggested that Servia should send a reply sufficiently favourable to give Austria an excuse for postponing action. Grey promptly telegraphed to Belgrade his advice that a favourable reply should be given on as many points as possible, but this should be conveyed to the Servian Government only after consultation with the French and Russian Ministers.

On July 25 Grey approved Buchanan's statement to Sazonoff that he did not think we could promise armed support of Russia and France. "I do not consider that public opinion here would or ought to sanction our going to war in the Servian quarrel. But if war does take place, we may be drawn into it by the development of other issues, and I am therefore anxious to prevent war." The only chance was for the four other Powers to join in asking Austria and Russia not to cross the frontier, and thus to give time for mediation. The co-operation of Germany was essential. To Lichnowsky he spoke in similar terms. His independent attitude was resented in St. Petersburg. Benckendorff feared that the plan of Germany, Italy, France and England co-operating in Vienna and St. Petersburg to keep the peace after Austria and Russia had mobilised would give Germany the impression that France and England were detached from Russia. France and England, replied Grey, would be no more detached from Russia than Germany from Austria. It should be indicated to Germany, rejoined Benckendorff, that we should not stand aside if there was a war. He had given no indication that we should stand aside, retorted Grey, but it was impossible to declare whether or no we would fight. The Russian Amba-

sador thoroughly understood the position. England, he reported to his chief, would not show her hand till a general war began and the Balance of Power was involved.<sup>1</sup> Grey desired to preserve the possibility of mediation till the last moment. "I can give you no formal assurance of English military co-operation; but I have not seen a single symptom in Grey, the King or anybody of importance that England seriously intends to remain neutral. My observations point strongly in the contrary direction. More I cannot say with a good conscience." Grey was not sure of public opinion, and feared that he might not be supported if he engaged himself too far. The English mind moved slowly, and the country was not fully awake. What scared it was not so much Austrian hegemony in the Balkans as German hegemony in the world.

The next stage in Grey's unceasing struggle for peace was his proposal on July 26 that the Ambassadors of Italy, Germany and France should join him in a conference, and that Austria, Servia and Russia should be asked to abstain from military operations pending its results. Germany accepted in principle mediation by the four Powers, and requested him to use his influence in St. Petersburg to localise the war. The Servian reply, rejoined Grey, had gone unexpectedly far to meet the Austrian demands, influenced doubtless by Russia. It was at Vienna that moderating counsels were required, and Germany should urge her ally to treat it as a basis for discussion. He would keep closely in touch with Germany so long as she worked for peace. When Benckendorff complained that Germany and Austria believed we should stand aside, Grey informed him of the significant order to the First Fleet, concentrated at Portland for manœuvres, not to disperse.

The sky had grown so dark that on July 27 the Foreign Minister confided his anxieties to his colleagues who, despite recurring crises, had never formally discussed the question of British intervention. After reporting the latest news, records Lord Morley, "Grey, in his own quiet way, which is none the less impressive for being so simple, made a memorable pronouncement.<sup>2</sup> The time had come, he said, when the Cabinet was bound to make up its mind plainly whether we were to take an active part with the two other Powers of the Entente, or to stand aside in the general European question and preserve an absolute neutrality. We could no longer defer deci-

<sup>1</sup> *Imperialism*, 30-2, 87-8, July 25 and 26.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Morley, *Memorandum on Resignation*, 1-2.

sion. Things were moving very rapidly. We could no longer wait on accident and postpone. If the Cabinet was for neutrality, he did not think that he was the man to carry out such a policy. Here he ended in accents of unaffected calm and candour. The Cabinet seemed to heave a sort of sigh, and a moment or two of breathless silence fell upon us." Morley followed in the contrary sense, and the Cabinet realised that it was deeply divided on the most momentous issue that had confronted British statesmen since Napoleon. There was no counting of heads, but during the following days of tense anxiety Grey was aware that he must not irrevocably commit a distracted Ministry or a self-governing nation which had not made up its mind.

The worst news on July 27 was Mensdorff's declaration that the Servian reply was unsatisfactory. It involved the greatest humiliation, retorted Grey, that he had ever seen a country undergo, and he was very disappointed that Austria was not content. On the same afternoon he made his first declaration in the House of Commons. After describing his proposal of Four Power mediation, he expressed his opinion that the Servian reply should provide a basis on which the Four Powers could arrange a settlement. "It must be obvious to any person who reflects upon the situation that the moment the dispute ceases to be one between Austria-Hungary and Servia and becomes one in which another Great Power is involved, it can but end in the greatest catastrophe that has ever befallen the Continent of Europe at one blow. No one can say what would be the limit of the issues that might be raised by such a conflict; the consequences of it, direct and indirect, would be incalculable." These carefully chosen words indicated intervention rather than neutrality. More he could not say, for only a decision by the Cabinet could commit the country.

The morning of July 28 brought the cheering news that Sazonoff favoured a direct exchange with Austria. That was the best of all methods, wired Grey to Berlin, and while there was such a prospect he would suspend every other suggestion. It was a false dawn, for on the same day Austria declared war on Servia. Next day Grey told Cambon that the Government had not made up its mind what it would do even if France were involved; but he informed Lichnowsky, in a private and friendly way, that he regarded the situation as very grave. There would be no question of intervention if Germany were not involved, or even if France were not drawn in. But if we



thought that British interests required us to intervene, the decision would have to be very rapid. He did not wish the friendly tone of their conversations to indicate that we should not take action. It was the first direct warning that, if France were involved, we should almost certainly intervene. Though not an official declaration, it was scarcely less significant, for his authority in the Cabinet and country was supreme. Russian interests, wired Mensdorff on the same day, left England cool; but, if France's vital interests were concerned, no English Government could prevent intervention on her side.

On the following day, July 30, Grey gave a more forcible hint. After a council at Potsdam on July 29 Bethmann bid for British neutrality by an assurance that, in the event of a victorious war, Germany aimed at no territorial acquisitions at the expense of France. In answer to a question of Goschen, he explained that this did not cover the French colonies. He could not tell what operations Germany might be forced to take in Belgium by the action of France; but if Belgium did not side against Germany, her integrity would be respected after the war. Grey sharply replied that the request for our neutrality could not for a moment be entertained. "From the material point of view such a proposal is unacceptable, for France could be so crushed as to lose her position as a Great Power and become subordinate to German policy without further territory in Europe being taken from her. But apart from that, for us to make this bargain with Germany at the expense of France would be a disgrace from which the good name of this country would never recover. . . . We must preserve our full freedom to act as circumstances may seem to us to require in any development of the present crisis." After administering this stinging rebuke he ended on a conciliatory and constructive note. "If the peace of Europe can be preserved and this crisis be safely passed, my own endeavour would be to promote some arrangement to which Germany could be a party, by which she could be assured that no hostile or aggressive policy could be pursued against her or her allies by France, Russia and ourselves, jointly or separately. I have desired this and worked for it, as far as I could, through the last Balkan crisis, and, Germany having a corresponding object, our relations sensibly improved. The idea has hitherto been too Utopian to form the subject of definite proposals. But if this present crisis, so much more acute than any that Europe has had for generations, be safely passed, I am hopeful that the

reaction and relief that will follow may make some more definite rapprochement between the Powers possible than was possible before."

Though Bethmann's conversation with Goschen after the Potsdam council on the evening of July 29 breathed the virtual inevitability of war, Grey made a further attempt. If Austria would content herself with the occupation of Belgrade and consented to discuss the question of a complete settlement, he hoped Russia would suspend her military preparations. Lichnowsky's announcement on July 31 that discussions between Russia and Austria were being resumed brought a gleam of hope, but Grey felt unable to urge the former to suspend military operations unless the latter agreed to limit her advance. If Germany could get any reasonable proposal put forward, he would support it at St. Petersburg and Paris. If they rejected it, he would have nothing more to do with the consequences. Otherwise, if France became involved, we should be drawn in. Here was the most categorical declaration that Grey had yet made.

The sky turned black as ink when the news reached London on July 31 that Russia had proclaimed general mobilisation and that Germany would be compelled to follow suit. Grey promptly asked the French and German Governments whether they would respect the neutrality of Belgium so long as no other Power violated it. To Brussels he telegraphed: "I assume that Belgium will to the utmost of her power maintain neutrality and desire and expect other Powers to observe and uphold it." When Germany, unlike France, declined to commit herself, he expressed his deep regret to Lichnowsky, adding that, if one of the combatants violated the neutrality of Belgium, it would be extremely difficult to restrain public feeling. When the Ambassador asked whether we would promise neutrality if Germany respected Belgian neutrality, he declined to tie his hands. We could not promise neutrality on that condition alone. Would not he formulate his conditions? queried Lichnowsky. For instance the integrity of France and her colonies might be guaranteed. Grey replied that he must decline any promise to remain neutral on similar terms, and that we must keep our hands free. Once again the trend of his thought was perfectly clear.

On July 31, after a meeting of the Cabinet, Grey replied to Cambon's question of the previous day what we were likely to do in the event of a German attack or threat to France. No

pledge could be given at that stage, for no treaties or obligations were at present involved. Further developments might alter the situation, and the question of Belgian neutrality might be an important factor in our decision. Cambon was deeply disappointed, and argued that it could not be to England's interest that France should be crushed. The mistake of 1870 should not be repeated. Could not the question be submitted to the Cabinet again? The Cabinet would meet again, answered Grey, as soon as there was some new development. Was the word "honour" to be eliminated from the English language? exclaimed Cambon in desperation to Wickham Steed. His only consolation was his knowledge that Grey personally favoured immediate intervention.<sup>1</sup>

On the following day, August 1, Germany answered Russia's general mobilisation by a declaration of war. In reply to Cambon's renewed entreaties Grey explained his conception of the Anglo-French partnership. The position differed completely from that of the Moroccan crises, in regard to which we had special obligations. France must decide without reckoning on an assistance which we were unable to promise. "As to the question of our obligation to France", he reported to Bertie, "I pointed out that we had no obligation. France did not wish to join in the war that seemed about to break out, but she was obliged to join in it because of her alliance. We had purposely kept clear of all alliances, in order that we might not be involved in difficulties in this way. I had assured Parliament again and again that our hands were free. It was most unreasonable to say that, because France had an obligation under an alliance of which we did not even know the terms, therefore we were bound equally with her by the obligation in that alliance to be involved in war. M. Cambon admitted that there was no obligation of this kind, but he urged very strongly the obligation of British interests. If we did not help France the *entente* would disappear; and whether victory came to Germany or to France and Russia, our situation at the end of the war would be very uncomfortable." The northern and western French coasts, he pointed out, were undefended, since the fleet was concentrated in the Mediterranean, and the German fleet might steam through the Straits any day. So long as we did not promise Germany neutrality, replied Grey, the French might be sure that the German fleet would not enter the Channel. He would see, however, whether we could give an

<sup>1</sup> D.D.F. XI, 365-6 and 375-6.

assurance. To Benckendorff he explained that public opinion was not demanding military action, and that the Government could not promise what it might not be able to perform.<sup>1</sup> King George's letter to the French President was studiously non-committal.

On the afternoon of the following day, August 2, Grey handed to the French Ambassador a statement approved by the Cabinet. "I am authorised to give an assurance that, if the German fleet comes into the Channel or through the North Sea to undertake hostile operations against French coasts or shipping, the British fleet will give all the protection in its power. This assurance is of course subject to the policy of H.M. Government receiving the support of Parliament, and must not be taken as binding H.M. Government to take any action until the above contingency of action by the German fleet takes place." This was far better than nothing, but Cambon wanted more. What should we say about the violation of Belgian neutrality? We were considering the matter, replied Grey. "I also explained how, at the beginning of a great catastrophe such as this European war, of which no one could foresee the consequences, where we had such enormous responsibilities in our Empire, as in India, or as regards countries in our occupation such as Egypt, when even the conditions of naval warfare and the possibility of protecting our coasts under these conditions were untried, it was impossible safely to send our military force out of the country. M. Cambon asked whether this meant that we should never do it. I replied that it dealt only with the present moment. He dwelt upon the moral effect of our sending only two divisions. But I said to send so small a force as two or even four divisions abroad at the beginning of a war would entail the maximum of risk to them and produce the minimum of effect."

On August 3 the news arrived that on the previous evening Germany had demanded free passage for her troops through Belgium, allowing twelve hours for the answer. At last Grey felt firm ground under his feet. Fulfilment of a treaty obligation would appeal to the man in the street who had never given a moment's thought to the Balance of Power. The Cabinet had contained interventionists like himself, neutralists, and a central group of Ministers who had not made up their minds. The division of opinion in Downing Street, reflecting a similar division in Parliament and in the country, had tied his hands,

<sup>1</sup> *Imperialismus*, V, 256.

for a great war can only be faced by a united people. Now our pledge to defend Belgium and our interest in saving France from catastrophic defeat combined to facilitate his task. Thus in his memorable speech to the House of Commons on August 3, the greatest Parliamentary success of his life, there was no trace of hesitation.<sup>1</sup> Having done his utmost to avert the conflict, he summoned his countrymen to play their part, knowing that they would not fail.

Beginning with a declaration that the decision was in our own hands, and revealing the Grey-Cambon letters of 1912 in confirmation of this statement, he announced the intention to defend the unprotected French coasts in the event of the German fleet entering the Channel. And now came the news of an ultimatum to Belgium. "If, in a crisis like this, we run away from those obligations of honour and interest as regards the Belgian treaty, I doubt whether, whatever material forces we might have at the end, it would be of very much value in face of the respect that we should have lost." The fleet was mobilised, the army was mobilising, but no final decision as to sending the Expeditionary Force abroad had been reached. "I have put the vital facts before the House", he concluded; "and if, as seems not improbable, we are forced, and rapidly forced, to take our stand upon those issues, then I believe, when the country realises what is at stake, what the real issues are, the magnitude of the impending dangers in the west of Europe which I have endeavoured to describe to the House, we shall be supported throughout, not only by the House of Commons, but by the determination, the resolution, the courage and the endurance of the whole country." The speech was described by Lord Hugh Cecil as the greatest example of the art of persuasion to which he had ever listened. Yet when Nicolson congratulated him he raised his arms and brought them down on a table with a crash, groaning, "I hate war! I hate war."

On the following day, August 4, when German troops had crossed the Belgian frontier, Goschen was instructed to ask for his passports, "and to say that H.M. Government feel bound to take all steps in their power to uphold the neutrality of Belgium and the observance of a treaty to which Germany is as much a party as ourselves." After despatching the ultimatum Grey poured out his heart to the American Ambassador, and his record of the conversation should be read as an addendum

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches*, 297-315.

to his speech. If after all that was said in 1870 about our treaty obligations we had now simply looked on at the flagrant violation of Belgian neutrality, we should have lost all respect. The principle of the sanctity of treaty rights was the test of the progress of civilisation and the foundation of all confidence between nations. There were two sets of people in Germany : men like the Chancellor and Lichnowsky, and the military party of force. If Germany won, she would dominate France ; the independence of Belgium, Holland, Denmark, and perhaps Norway and Sweden, would be a mere shadow, and all their harbours would be at Germany's disposal. She would dominate the whole of Western Europe, which would make our position quite impossible. Under such circumstances we could not exist as a first-class state. Though the Balance of Power was never mentioned, Grey's words were a sermon on that familiar text and his policy was dominated throughout by that historic principle. In past times the danger had come from Spain and France : now it came from Germany.

The course taken by the British Government in 1914 seemed clearly marked out by the events and decisions of the preceding decade. "My God, Mr. Page, what else could we do?" exclaimed the King. The violation of Belgian neutrality roused the country to righteous anger and supplied the theme of our ultimatum, but it was the occasion rather than the cause of our declaration of war. For better or worse we had departed from the traditional policy of "splendid isolation", and had become entangled in the quarrels and ambitions of our friends. "We were tied to France inextricably," declared Gibson Bowles, an acute Conservative critic, "tied by countless invisible threads such as fastened down Gulliver while he slumbered in the land of little men." Our frontier was on the Rhine—largely in consequence of the errors of German policy and tactics. Though Great Britain was not allied to any Power except Portugal and Japan and though in theory she retained perfect liberty of action, she had now half unwittingly, but none the less definitely, thrown in her lot with France and Russia. The past could not be undone. Had we stood aside the Central Powers would have won an easy victory, and we should have found ourselves alone in Europe. France and Russia would have scorned us as false friends who, after years of diplomatic co-operation and expert discussions, deserted them in the crisis of their fate ; and the German menace, intensified by the collapse of the Triple

Entente, would have compelled us to arm to the teeth on sea and land. German hegemony in Europe, no longer merely a nightmare, would have become a fact. Grey's assurance on August 3 that our hands were free was correct in form but inaccurate in substance; for his whole speech breathed the conviction that we should be not only endangered but disgraced if we left France in the lurch.

Now that the passions of the conflict have abated, it is generally recognised both that Grey strove for peace and that, when Germany declared war on France without French provocation and violated the neutrality of Belgium, we had to intervene. Mensdorff and Lichnowsky, who were on the spot, knew that there was no real choice. Yet differences of opinion remain as to whether he might have averted the catastrophe by a more resourceful diplomacy. Many have argued that if he had vigorously urged Russia to abstain from the general mobilisation which automatically turned a local conflict into a world war, or had told her that we would not participate in a conflict arising from an Austro-Serb quarrel, she might have held her hand. Others maintain that, if he had given Germany a clear warning before July 29, she might have kept her ally in check. A third school suggests that he should have told Vienna in good time what was in his mind, since the policy was shaped in Vienna, not in Berlin. Lloyd George complains that he did not proclaim at the outset that a violation of Belgian neutrality would be regarded as a *casus belli*. It is equally impossible to bury the controversies about the policy of the preceding years. Some critics, hankering after the doctrine of "splendid isolation," complain that he sacrificed what was left of our self-determination, and that, in Churchill's phrase, we had the obligations of an alliance without its advantages. Others lament that he opposed the transformation of the entente into an alliance, the precise obligations of which would have been known to the world. Some maintain that our hypothetical commitments required a military force of Continental size, others that his steady support encouraged French and Russian Chauvinists to dream of victories with the aid of British arms.

Grey was aware of such criticisms, and during his years of retirement he was continually turning them over in his mind. In his impressive apologia there is no note either of self-righteousness or of retreat. To stand by France, first in regard to Morocco as by treaty bound, and later in the whole field of

international politics so long as her policy was unaggressive ; to complete the rapprochement with Russia which Lansdowne had begun ; to strive for a naval agreement and neighbourly relations with Germany ; to maintain our traditions of an invincible navy and a small voluntary army ; to be friends with the United States ; to keep the alliance with Japan in repair ; to carry on the humanitarian efforts of his predecessor in Macedonia and the Belgian Congo ; to labour for peace without for a moment forgetting the dread possibilities of war : here were the outlines of a programme of which he saw no reason to be ashamed. He consulted his expert advisers but went his own way. He stood in 1914 precisely where he had taken his stand in 1906. His task was to work the system constructed before he was called to the helm and to bear in mind what public opinion would or would not allow. There is no reason to believe that Lansdowne would have acted differently in any of the major emergencies of the time. The partnership with Russia was the logical sequel to the partnership with France, and trustful friendship with Berlin was frustrated not only by the *Flottenpolitik* but by the undying Franco-German feud. It was the unhappy lot of this cool, sensitive, disinterested, peace-loving man to be faced by problems too complex to be solved by a single country, and to carry the British Empire into a conflict which he honestly strove to avert. The only defence he would have wished is a plain record of what he tried to accomplish and a full recognition of the difficulties which he found in his path.





POINCARÉ



## CHAPTER II POINCARÉ

### I

THE main preoccupation of French statesmen during the years following the Algeiras Conference was the question of Morocco. None of the Great Powers took so little interest in the Bosnian crisis as France, and the growth of the German fleet only concerned her at second hand. The Casablanca crisis of 1908 was followed by the Franco-German pact of 1909, which in turn was succeeded by the breakdown of the economic *consortium*. Since the fall of Delcassé the Quai d'Orsay had not endeavoured to force the pace, but suspicions existed on both sides which prevented a friendly give and take. The expedition to Fez in May 1911 was the last straw. That France was resolved to maintain and increase her political preponderance was fully understood at Berlin. The only question at issue was the price she would have to pay.

Whatever may be said of the methods of Caillaux during the anxious negotiations following the despatch of the *Panther* to Agadir, it is beyond dispute that France got the best of the bargain. The second Morocco crisis, like the first, ended in a settlement angrily resented by full-blooded German patriots. Yet, despite the elimination of German rivalry at the cost of a trifling tropical concession, the position of the French Premier at the end of the crisis had become untenable. Profoundly distrustful as he was of his inexperienced Foreign Minister and still more of the officials of the Quai d'Orsay, he took the helm at an early stage of the stormy voyage and held it firmly to the close. The dual control involved independent action which was naturally disliked by his colleague, and which gave a handle to his numerous foes. The merits of his statesmanship were outweighed by his personal unpopularity, and when the hurricane was over he was marked down for destruction. The Agadir crisis was an agitating experience, and French nerves required a sedative. The Ministry, weak from the start in *personnel* and Parliamentary support, was now disunited. The cry arose for a new leader and a stronger team.

Poincaré's voluminous Memoirs open with the fall of

Caillaux and his summons to the helm in January 1912.<sup>1</sup> Prudence Lorraine, as his friends called him, had entered the Chamber at an early age and held Cabinet posts in the 'nineties. At this point he withdrew for a decade to win eminence at the bar, as Waldeck-Rousseau had done after the death of Gambetta. Yet he never lost touch with politics. On the fall of Rouvier in the spring of 1906 he refused the Premiership, contenting himself with the Ministry of Finance in the short-lived Sarrien Cabinet. When Clemenceau followed Sarrien in the autumn, he declined the offer of the Quai d'Orsay. To serve under the Tiger was hardly an alluring prospect, and he could afford to wait. His boundless self-confidence, his indefatigable energy, his incomparable lucidity, his unblemished character, his ardent patriotism, his detachment from recent party polemics and his central position marked him out as the man for an emergency.

On December 22, 1911, the Senate appointed a Commission to examine the Morocco and Congo treaties signed on November 4 and already approved by the Chamber. Only the latter, which involved a cession of territory, required legislative approval, but they were rightly regarded as an indivisible whole. Among the eighty-six members of the Commission were ex-Premiers and ex-Ministers of Foreign Affairs, ex-diplomatists, and a few influential Senators, among them Poincaré, who had no claim to be specialists. By a unanimous vote Bourgeois was chosen President and Poincaré, a declared supporter of the treaty, provisional *Rapporteur*. The study of the material provided by the Government, supplemented by long conversations with Caillaux and de Selves, confirmed his approval. At this moment the Premier's denial of the notorious fact that he had negotiated with Germany independently of the Quai d'Orsay led to the resignation of de Selves and the collapse of the Ministry. "Je demande un Ministère Poincaré", exclaimed Clemenceau, who had engineered the overthrow of Caillaux.<sup>2</sup> "Pour le renverser?"

<sup>1</sup> Poincaré's year at the Quai d'Orsay must be studied in *D.D.F.*, vols. 1-5, and *Iswoolsky*, vol. 2. After the war he explained and defended his policy on three occasions—in his lectures, *Les Origines de la Guerre*, delivered in 1921; in his *Souvenirs* which began to appear in 1926; and in *Les Responsabilités de la Guerre: Quatorze Questions par René Gerin, Quatorze Réponses Par Raymond Poincaré*, published in 1930. The most intimate study of the man is by his life-long friend Gabriel Hanotaux, *Raymond Poincaré*. Sisley Huddleston, *Poincaré* (1924) and Samné, *Raymond Poincaré* (1933), supply biographical details. G. H. Stuart, *French Foreign Policy, 1898-1914*, and Michon, *L'Alliance Franco-Russe*, are useful.

<sup>2</sup> *Souvenirs*, I, ch. 1.

inquired Poincaré with a smile. "Non, non, pour le soutenir", rejoined the Tiger. The new Ministry of Concentration, the strongest in *personnel* for many a year, was formed on January 14, 1912. In view of the paramount need of unified control the Premier took the Foreign Office for himself, calling to his aid such well-tried colleagues as Bourgeois and Millebrand, Briand and Delcassé. It was to prove an efficient and united team.

The Ministerial declaration on January 16 struck the note of national unity. The first task would be to ratify the treaties of November 4. When completed by a loyal understanding with Spain, it would permit the Protectorate in Morocco which formed the natural goal of the African policy of France. It would also admit of the maintenance, in a sincerely pacific spirit, of courteous and friendly relations with a great neighbour nation inspired by the mutual respect of their interests and dignity. The Government would remain faithful to existing alliances and friendships. However profoundly pacific was France, it was impossible to control all eventualities. The army and navy would be the object of their active solicitude. In these words there was nothing to offend beyond the Rhine. Yet Frenchmen were relieved by a note of vigour and authority which had been lacking since the Clemenceau Ministry fell in 1909. Poincaré was too reserved to inspire affection, but his self-confidence bred confidence in others. At this stage of his career he had few critics and fewer enemies than any French statesman of the first rank. That something more than a Parliamentary re-shuffle had occurred was clear to everyone. "M. Poincaré", reported the German Ambassador after his first diplomatic reception, "differs from many of his countrymen by a deliberate avoidance of that smooth and fulsome tone characteristic of the Frenchman.<sup>1</sup> His manner is measured, his words unadorned and carefully weighed. He makes the impression of a man with a lawyer's mind, who expresses his convictions with stubborn emphasis and pursues his aims with a powerful will." The Russian Ambassador described him as a very remarkable personality and his team as the strongest which France had seen for years.<sup>2</sup>

The first duty of the new Premier was to secure the assent of the Senate to the treaties. He admitted that the settlement was not and could not be perfect, but it was better than the Act of Algeciras or the pact of 1909. It implied no change in the

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXI, 384.

<sup>2</sup> *Iswolsky*, II, 51.

orientation of national policy, of which the alliance with Russia and the *entente cordiale* were the unalterable principles. "Republican France is profoundly pacific; but she sees the best pledge of peace in the strict maintenance of her military, naval and financial power, the preservation of our great national traditions, the steady defence of our rights and interests." Despite an attack by Clemenceau, the Senate approved the treaty with a few dissentients.

No one on either side of the Rhine imagined that the liquidation of the Morocco problem was the end of Franco-German antagonism. Pichon, who had been Foreign Minister in the Clemenceau Cabinet, sent an ominous warning to the new Premier through Paléologue, the Directeur Politique of the Quai d'Orsay. "Be prepared. The event can occur much quicker than one imagines. Advise M. Poincaré to summon the Ministers of War and Marine with the chiefs of the General Staff and yourself. Let him remember his responsibilities. Let him not be taken unawares." It was true enough that an indefinable *malaise* existed on both sides of the frontier. The final sacrifice of political ambitions in Morocco in return for a strip of the French Congo was a blow to German pride. Moreover the slate was not sponged quite clean. Complaints on behalf of German Consular *protégés* were frequent; the seditious activities of Karl Ficke in Morocco continued; and Lyautey, the first Governor-General, complained in 1913 that hostility remained the rule of German policy.

The slowness of the negotiations with Spain compelled the French Government to set up a new regime for the preservation of order. Since the Sultan had accepted the treaty of November 4, the first step was to secure his assent to the Protectorate and to ask the other signatories of the Act of Algeciras to follow suit. No difficulty arose in any quarter. The French Minister at Tangier was despatched to Fez, and on March 30, 1912, the Sultan signed the treaty he had brought, accepting a French Protectorate in return for support against danger to his person or territories.<sup>1</sup> The dream of Delcassé had come true. The French Empire in North-West Africa was rounded off.

## II

Hardly had the new pilot embarked than a storm blew up in the Mediterranean. The Tripoli war had lasted longer than

<sup>1</sup> D.D.F. II, 278-9.

was anticipated, and there seemed little prospect of bringing it to an end. With her millions of Mussulman subjects and with her financial interests in Turkey, France had never smiled on the enterprise, but the mistress of Morocco had no title to complain of the seizure of Tripoli by her partner in the secret agreement of 1900. She displayed much less interest in the drama than Russia, who, alone of the Powers, strove unwearingly, though vainly, for mediation. That the conflict became for a brief period the main preoccupation of the Poincaré Ministry was due solely to the chapter of accidents.<sup>1</sup>

On January 16, 1912, the news arrived that the *Carthage*, a French mailboat bound from Marseilles for Tunis, had been stopped by an Italian destroyer and taken to Cagliari, on the ground that a French aviator with his aeroplane was on board. Poincaré telegraphed to Rome to secure the release of the vessel, for the innocent aviator was *en route* to a race in Tunis. Next day the Italian Ambassador explained the action of his Government. He had installed secret agents at Marseilles to watch the passengers for Tunis, and for some weeks he had been making complaints at the Quai d'Orsay. To Poincaré's demand for the immediate liberation of the ship the Italian Government replied that the aviator had signed a contract with Turkey, and that the aeroplane was destined for the Turkish troops in Tripoli. It had therefore ordered it to be landed in Sardinia, after which the *Carthage* could continue her voyage, the question of responsibilities being reserved. The aviator's father volunteered the statement that his son had no intention of transferring his machine to a foreign nation, and Poincaré maintained his demand for the release of the ship.

At this moment, on January 19, the Italians seized the *Manouba*, bound from Marseilles to Tunis, which carried a Turkish hospital mission, and took her to Cagliari on the pretext that the twenty-nine Turks were officers in disguise.<sup>2</sup> The Turkish Ambassador, who informed Poincaré, begged for energetic intervention. Next day the *Carthage* was released, with the aviator and his aeroplane on board, but the Turks found on the *Manouba* were held as prisoners. Italy, argued the Foreign Minister, could not renounce the right of search, but he hoped that French opinion would not let such incidents disturb friendly relations. The French Cabinet replied that the Turks must be set at liberty, since their civilian status was confirmed by the Turkish Embassy and the shipping company.

<sup>1</sup> D.D.F. I, 486 and *Souvenirs* I, ch. 2.

<sup>2</sup> D.D.F. I, 508-13.



On January 22 Poincaré made his first notable utterance on foreign affairs. An aeroplane, he contended, was not an instrument of war liable to seizure on a neutral vessel, and it was for the French authorities, not the Italian, to establish the identity and status of passengers. The Italian Government, though unable to renounce the right of visit, regretted that its exercise had interfered with two French ships and was ready to discuss the juridical issue. The speech ended on a conciliatory note. "The French Government, like the Italian, is convinced that these two incidents, painful though they be, cannot change or trouble the friendly relations of the two countries, which rest on the community of memories of culture, the affinity of race, and the solidarity of a great number of essential interests. A passing cloud will not darken the horizon." The declaration provoked no discordant note in the Chamber and enhanced Poincaré's prestige at home and abroad. "You have won an authority of which we shall enjoy the results," wrote Paul Cambon from London; "all the representatives of France owe you a debt of gratitude."

After this triumph in the Chamber Poincaré telegraphed to Rome that it was indispensable to secure the release of the Turks for verification of their identity at a French port. Barrère explained that his chief had used the most friendly language, despite the legitimate excitement of his hearers, and that, though resolved to obtain satisfaction for France, his sentiments towards Italy were unchanged. Despite this amicable message, San Giuliano argued that the French summons to hand over the Turks involved not only a surrender of belligerent rights but a sacrifice of prestige. Reminding the Foreign Minister that the question should be envisaged from the angle of the higher interests of the two Powers, Barrère urged that no humiliation was involved. If they proved to be military men they would, in his opinion, be interned on French territory till the end of the war. The two men agreed to search for a formula, and Barrère warned his chief against the danger of press attacks.

The Barrère-San Giuliano formula, in so far as it referred the question of the *Carthage* to the Hague Court, was accepted by Poincaré; but the proposed reference to the more complicated problem of the *Manouba* was rejected as involving partial acceptance of the Italian case. When Poincaré's alternative formula was accepted in Rome with some trifling modifications, the trouble appeared to be over. But at this moment the stopping

of a third French vessel, which was taken to Tripoli and examined for contraband, evoked a stiff telegram from Paris. An immediate solution was requested, since a delay of twenty-four hours might provoke Parliamentary incidents. When Barrère telegraphed that the vessel had been searched for contraband and released, Poincaré sent him a stinging rebuke.<sup>1</sup> The *Tavignano* had never carried contraband. "I ask myself how you could accept the suspicions of the Italian Government. I also ask myself why you did not protest against the clear violation of the Franco-Italian Convention of 1875, the *Tavignano* being a mail-boat. You seem entirely to misconceive the state of French opinion. If these incidents recur, we cannot guarantee order at Marseilles or in Tunis. It appears, moreover, that the *Tavignano* was stopped in territorial waters. Finally it is strange that she was taken to Tripoli, which Europe has not yet recognized as an Italian port and where there is no Prize Court. For all these reasons I beg you to make to the Italian Government the most express reserves on the consequences of this new and annoying incident." The distinguished Ambassador had never received such chastisement. Assuredly there was a new broom at the Quai d'Orsay.

Barrère kept his temper. "When I transmit information supplied by the Italian Government and communicate its views, it by no means follows that I share them. . . . Your Excellency seems to believe that I misapprehend the state of French opinion in regard to Italy. I can assure you that is not the case. But there is also the other side of the frontier. My strict duty towards the Government is to give a correct impression of the state of mind in this country. It would be a serious mistake to believe that it accepts without bitterness the solution of the incident of the vessels. The press, watched over by M. Giolitti, retains self-control. But I learn on all sides that public opinion regards the surrender of the Turks as a national humiliation and that it is deeply hurt. I must add that I have had to exert all my authority to secure its acceptance. For our agreements with Italy owe their value above all to the assent of the people. This popular sanction it is a major national interest to preserve, above all in a dangerous period when we may be dragged into a conflagration. Our pact of 1902, the Chief of the General Staff can tell you, places three army corps at our disposal, and allows the nineteenth corps to take part in a struggle. That is the principal asset—for there are others—

<sup>1</sup> D.D.F. I, 554, 567.

of our relations with Italy. These considerations, I hope, will suffice to explain why my first preoccupation, which is that of the safety and glory of my country, leads me to weaken the moral effect here of this deplorable incident, especially as it is the fault of our neighbours. If Your Excellency approves, I hope you will communicate them to the Cabinet." The chief architect of the Franco-Italian rapprochement was rightly determined to defend his handiwork against the impatience of a novice. "Poincaré est très habile avec le Parlement", observed Pichon, "mais il, ne l'est que là<sup>1</sup>. Il est trop sec." "Il ne sait pas négocier," rejoined Georges Louis. "Il n'a que deux réponses, oui ou non." Iswolsky complained to Sazonoff that Poincaré was completely ignorant of diplomatic forms and methods and was needlessly rough in his manner.

The French examination of the Turks showed that only one failed to establish his status as a member of the Red Crescent, and the verdict of the Hague Court, delivered on May 6, was on the whole satisfactory to France.<sup>2</sup> The seizure of the *Carthage* was condemned, and Italy was ordered to pay 160,000 francs in compensation. The verdict on the *Manouba* case was less simple. The Italian naval authorities were wrong in seizing the vessel and taking it to Cagliari. Once captured, however, their conduct was correct in so far as they stopped the boat only long enough to remove the Turks. Italy was instructed to pay 4,000 francs, from which the expenses of watching the vessel were to be deducted. As usual the suspicious belligerent was in the wrong.

A fresh complication threatened when a member of the French Chamber tabled a motion for the publication of the Franco-Italian agreements. Poincaré consulted Barrère as to how much he might say. The revelation of the pact of 1902, replied the Ambassador, affecting as it did the national defences, would have the gravest international consequences and must on no account take place. The pact of 1900, on the other hand, recording the mutual disinterestedness of the two countries in regard to Morocco and Tripoli, might be summarized with Italian consent. When the Ambassador reported that San Giuliano agreed to a statement, Poincaré suggested the following mysterious formula. "L'entente qui intervint alors entre la France et l'Italie au sujet du Maroc et de la Tripolitaine fut considéré par l'un et l'autre Gouvernements comme une heur-

<sup>1</sup> *Les Carnets de Georges Louis*, II, 17. May 21, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> *D.D.F.* I, 640-1.

euse occasion d'affirmer que l'amitié des deux pays était à l'épreuve de toute éventualité." San Giuliano feared that the last phrase would provoke unwelcome inquiries from Berlin, and Barrère drafted an alternative formula which he was willing to accept. "L'entente . . . fut considérée par l'un et l'autre Gouvernements comme une heureuse occasion de constater que, par le règlement de leurs intérêts méditerranées, se trouvaient désormais écartées toutes les éventualités qui auraient pu (ou de nature à) compromettre l'amitié des deux pays." That the Franco-Italian friendship emerged without grave damage from these troublesome incidents was due less to Poincaré than to Barrère.

### III

When the German obstacle to a French Protectorate in Morocco had been removed, it remained to settle with Spain.<sup>1</sup> To the intense annoyance of the Quai d'Orsay she had taken her own line in 1911, announcing, by the occupation of Larache and Alcazar, her agreement with Germany that the expedition to Fez had destroyed the *status quo*. The revelation by the *Matin* on November 8, 1911, of the secret treaty of 1904 came as a shock to Frenchmen on the morrow of their sacrifices in the Congo, for they learned that they were to have Spain as a partner. It showed moreover that she had broken her promise not to act in her zone of influence during the ensuing fifteen years without previous agreement. In 1912, as in 1904, the negotiations proved long and difficult; for France was strong and Spain was proud.

When her adhesion was invited to the Morocco agreement of November 4, 1911, Spain replied that the necessary guarantees for her interests and rights must first be obtained.<sup>2</sup> At the end of November a French draft on the basis of the treaty of 1904 was forwarded to Grey, who thought it reasonable and promised his good offices.<sup>3</sup> De Selves pointed out that the proposed frontier of the Spanish zone of influence was slightly modified in favour of France, and emphasized the demand that Spain should renounce all participation outside her zone.<sup>4</sup> "It would be misinterpreting the unanimous sentiment of the French people to think that, having purchased the disinterestedness of Germany by the cession of French territories, it could admit Spain to an active part without having shared in the

<sup>1</sup> *Souvenirs*, I, ch. 4.

<sup>2</sup> 222-6, 245.

<sup>3</sup> *D.D.F.* I, 43-4. November 6.

<sup>4</sup> 253-7.

payment." Though the tone was courteous enough, repeated references to the limits of concession suggested that France was determined to keep as much as possible of her prize.

The Spanish counter-project of December 19 was widely different.<sup>1</sup> De Selves complained that it claimed greater powers in the Spanish zone than France possessed in hers, and infringed rights already granted by Morocco to third parties.<sup>2</sup> The French Ambassador was instructed to bring the discussion back to the French plan, while explaining that France had no wish to hinder the action of Spain in her zone or to place it under French tutelage. Garcia Prieto, the Spanish Foreign Minister, consented to discuss the French proposals article by article, though his nerves were obviously frayed.<sup>3</sup> It was a difficult problem to solve, for Spain desired the maximum of autonomy in her zone, while France was equally opposed to a *condominium* or the creation of two virtually independent Moroccos. According to Garcia Prieto France was leaving to Spain only the execution of decisions reached behind her back. The Spanish Ambassador in London complained to Grey of Britain's partiality to France and of the French claim to frame regulations applicable to both zones, adding that Spain must administer the customs in her own zone.<sup>4</sup> Grey observed that the rôle of conciliator was a thankless one, but that he would continue his good offices. He proposed that general regulations should be drawn up in Fez and applied in both zones, all other regulations being decided in each zone. The *status quo* as regards the customs should continue for a year, during which a technical commission would report.

A memorandum by the Quai d'Orsay, dated January 17, 1912, laid down three essential principles—respect for the sovereignty of the Sultan and the unity of the Empire, the avoidance of a *condominium*, economic equality throughout the country.<sup>5</sup> The Spanish Government might break off negotiations or, more probably, drag them out in the hope of blocking the French Protectorate. "It would be decidedly dangerous to delay the execution of the Franco-German treaty, having regard both to the Powers and the Sultan, who is waiting impatiently for the organisation of the new regime. A delay in the understanding with Spain must therefore not prevent France from utilising her advantages. We are indeed in the best position to deal with her if we meet with open or veiled

<sup>1</sup> 291-4, 317.

<sup>4</sup> 465-6, 472.

<sup>2</sup> 394, 411-13.

<sup>5</sup> 494-6.

<sup>3</sup> 418-20.

antagonism." Such was the situation when Poincaré was called to the helm. The two chief issues were the delimitation of zones and the extent of Spain's powers in her own sphere. After two months of discussion no progress had been made.

A second French scheme, dated January 24, endeavoured to meet Spain's demand for greater autonomy in her zone. The Caillaux Ministry had suggested that the administrative system in the French and Spanish zones should be identical, in order to emphasise the indivisibility of the Moroccan Empire. The Spanish Government on the other hand argued that it would involve either permanent Spanish subordination or perpetual conflict, and Poincaré withdrew the demand. Grey's suggestion for the continuation of the customs for a year and the appointment of a commission of French and Spanish experts to discuss the service of the loans was adopted. The Commission was accepted by Spain and started work at Madrid, but in other matters there was no advance. The proposal for the diminution of the Spanish zone in the north and the cession of the Spanish sphere in the south, with the exception of Ifni itself, caused the greatest distress.<sup>1</sup> "The moment is bound to come", wrote the French Ambassador, "when we shall have to show our teeth; but it is better to wait till other questions are settled in principle and we are nearer a solution."

On March 5 Poincaré informed the Spanish Ambassador that French opinion was becoming impatient, and that, in order to calm it, France would have to install herself in Morocco.<sup>2</sup> The first step was to ask for Grey's active support, particularly as regards the northern frontier. The extension desired by France, it was pointed out, was ordained by nature herself. The crest separating the rivers flowing to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic was the obvious limit between the two zones, and it was indispensable to the security of the French Protectorate. Grey welcomed a frontier commission, but he could not accept the principle of the watershed before seeing on a map what loss to Spain it involved. Poincaré, however, rejected the idea of a commission as impracticable. Garcia Prieto suggested alternative cessions, which the French Ambassador dismissed as evincing a desire to terminate the negotiations. Alarmed by this warning, the Spanish statesman hinted that he had not said his last word. His proposals were promptly rejected by the French Cabinet, which asked for new ones. At this moment Poincaré informed his

<sup>1</sup> 531-5.

<sup>2</sup> D.D.F. II, 151-6.

representatives abroad that the Protectorate would be organised. "This organisation will be carried out with loyal regard to our obligations towards Spain; but we cannot wait any longer without failing in our engagement to Europe to maintain order and commercial liberty in Morocco."

On March 19 the Spanish Ambassador expressed painful surprise at the French reply.<sup>1</sup> Poincaré sharply retorted that the French Government had also felt very painful surprise on receiving proposals contrary to previous conversations. It would be easy to suggest solutions which France need not forthwith reject. She had already made many conditional concessions, and Spain would suffer most from a break. She could not administer her zone, which remained subject to the authority of the Sultan, and the customs would remain pledged to the creditors. This conversation was followed by a new offer from Madrid, but only in regard to the south.<sup>2</sup> The French Ambassador was almost in despair. A rupture of negotiations, he reminded García Prieto, might involve a conflict between the military posts, with incalculable consequences. He was well aware of it, replied the Minister, but the national honour was engaged. No Spaniard would go further than the terms proposed, which were already too much for the Conservatives and the army chiefs.

It was now the French turn to make a gesture, though Poincaré was resolved to yield as little as he could. The time was near, he wrote on March 29, for France to announce her final terms for territorial compensations.<sup>3</sup> New proposals for both zones were sent to Madrid, but the Ambassador was instructed not to reveal them all at once and only to give way on each in case of necessity. He accordingly hinted at some minor concessions, and once more declared that a refusal would involve a break. The Spanish Government offered minor concessions which Poincaré found unacceptable.<sup>4</sup> If, as he feared, the negotiations broke down, France would of course retain entire control of the customs and would organise her Protectorate. At this point Grey suggested concessions both at Madrid and Paris. "Sir Francis Bertie", concluded the note to Poincaré, "has the honour to express the earnest hope that the French Government will not in any case break off negotiations, for in such an event the Spanish Government would either ask that the matter be referred to arbitration, or

<sup>1</sup> 226.

<sup>2</sup> 271-2, 277-8.

<sup>3</sup> 233-4, 246.

<sup>4</sup> 329-33, 344-8.

as soon as the French Government proceeded to the organisation of a Protectorate, appeal to all the Powers signatories of the Algeciras Act. Should the Spanish Government take either of these steps, much embarrassment would probably be caused." Both parties responded to the appeal by fresh concessions in regard to the zones. The Spanish Premier, Canalejas, more conciliatory than his Foreign Minister, expressed his great desire that an *entente sans nuage* should follow an agreement.<sup>1</sup> Poincaré was delighted by the cordial message, and instructed his Ambassador to find out what was meant.

Despite a momentary *détente* Grey's intervention was in vain. Disturbances in Fez stiffened the French resolve to secure the whole valley of the Wargha, and Cambon was instructed to beg Grey to talk to Madrid.<sup>2</sup> If Spain abandoned the coveted valley, her southern zone could be enlarged. The demand was rejected by Spain, and Sir Maurice de Bunsen reported that the Ministers were unanimously for resistance. Geoffray believed that the Spaniards would never yield, and he wondered if perhaps England also objected to a change which would bring the French zone close to the Mediterranean. To meet such an objection, if it existed, and to secure Grey's support at Madrid, Poincaré sent a message to Cambon that in no case should the French frontier approach the coast. Geoffray reported that the cession of the whole valley of the Wargha was unacceptable, and pointed out once again the dangers of a rupture. Was it not in the interest of France, in the event of complications elsewhere, to avoid a hostile neighbour in the south? Would not a quarrel gravely damage her economic interests in Spain? Could not France be satisfied with less than the whole valley?

In view of the refusal of Spain to cede the whole Wargha valley, Grey urged the French to leave the upper part to Spain. This too was declined. Geoffray was becoming anxious. The British Government, he wired on May 20, was doing its best in the Wargha question, but there were other points at issue.<sup>3</sup> With such impulsive and impressionable peoples, a rupture would provoke very serious tension and a Spanish-German rapprochement would come of itself. Spain was not a very formidable Power, but she had been the cause of many disasters to France. To keep one or two army corps on the Pyrenees would weaken her defences in the event of a European war. "Perhaps I see things too much from the angle of Madrid", he concluded, "but I have the impression that in

<sup>1</sup> 347-8, 362.

<sup>2</sup> 367, 387-91, 394-6.

<sup>3</sup> D.D.F. III, 26-8, 101-2.



this Warga affair we are playing with fire." The King was the best friend of France, but German diplomacy was at work. Poincaré withdrew his demand for the whole valley, but Garcia Prieto declared that he would resign rather than accept the French proposals concerning the southern zone.

The French Premier, who had no desire for a break, was ready to approve most of the territorial items if a settlement were reached on customs and finance. On July 25 he suggested that the agreement might be initialled, reserving the subject of Tangier, in regard to which negotiations were proceeding very slowly.<sup>1</sup> At this moment, when harbour was in sight, Germany objected to the proposed customs arrangements, and negotiations were held up for a month by French complaints of unfriendly action by Spanish Consuls in the French zone. The former led to a sharp encounter between Poincaré and Baron Lancken. The latter once more endangered the negotiations, but was closed by the recall of the Consuls. Both incidents were firmly handled by Poincaré, who refused to be rattled by threats. In his dealings with Spain and Italy alike he was prepared to run greater risks than his Ambassadors.

When the consular *intermezzo* was over negotiations were resumed. On October 11 King Alfonso complained that Poincaré was continually making fresh demands, and that Spain had given way on territorial questions both in north and south.<sup>2</sup> Learning from other sources that the Spanish Government was expecting a rupture, Poincaré authorised his Ambassador to get the best terms he could in the two remaining questions, the frontier in the Muluya and the contribution of Spain to the service of a loan. When the Spanish Ambassador in London declared that these two points alone remained, Grey begged Paris to meet the Spanish views. At the eleventh hour the zone question nearly led to a break. The Spanish Minister of War threatened resignation—a significant gesture in a country where, as the Ambassador reminded his chief, politicians were haunted by *pronunciamentos*.<sup>3</sup> Only the energetic intervention of the King led to the drafting of a formula which Paris was willing to accept. On October 25 Alfonso sent his congratulations and thanks for the spirit of justice and conciliation in which he had conducted the negotiations. Poincaré gratefully replied that he hoped the agreement would open an era of confidence and intimate friendship.

<sup>1</sup> 294.

<sup>2</sup> D.D.F. IV, 121-4, 180, 186.

<sup>3</sup> 224-6, 231-2, 238.

The terms of the treaty signed on November 27, 1912, were described by the French Premier as honourable to both sides.<sup>1</sup> Neither France nor Spain had obtained their full demands. Franco-Spanish relations, after a period of strain, resumed their friendliness. That the new regime should function satisfactorily was a major interest of French policy. In view of the growing danger of a European war, he urged Lyautey to content himself with few troops and a moderate expenditure. The Sultan remained as a figure-head, the source of civil and religious authority, while the task of national defence and his relations with foreign Powers were assumed by France. The new Protectorate was to experience various troubles during the years of consolidation, interrupted as it was by the outbreak of war. But the final settlement with Germany in 1911 and with Spain in 1912 constituted a significant addition to the strength and safety of France. Poincaré had reaped where Delcassé and Caillaux had sown.

## IV

The main preoccupation of the Poincaré Ministry was to strengthen France morally and materially for the conflict with Germany which most French statesmen expected to occur. The treaties of November 4, 1911, were a regional settlement, leaving the larger issues as intractable as ever. Reports from Berlin were far from reassuring. On November 5 Jules Cambon described the deep and universal discontent.<sup>2</sup> France should realize that it was not the German Government which was bellicose but the German nation. A similar picture was painted by the French Military Attaché on December 16.<sup>3</sup> "Whether Germany's intentions are defensive or offensive, the increase of the army is clearly aimed against us. . . . The chances of conflict increase, and we must be prepared. . . . I am absolutely convinced that the Emperor and the Chancellor are pacific, but they are almost universally accused of weakness. War is talked of in circles where such an idea had not hitherto been entertained." Similar alarming news continued to arrive from Berlin after Poincaré succeeded de Selves.

If the tone of Germany had stiffened during 1911, the mood of France had changed no less since the zero hour of 1905. Caillaux had stood up to Kiderlen, and Poincaré, a son of Lorraine, was even less likely to retreat. Here is his confes-

<sup>1</sup> 581-96.<sup>2</sup> D.D.F. I, 30-2.<sup>3</sup> 343-7.

sion of faith in regard to the crucial issue which kept the two nations apart.<sup>1</sup> "L'intérêt, autant que la raison, nous commandait de travailler au maintien de la paix. Mais nous nous disons que, s'il advenait jamais qu'elle fût troublée par l'Allemagne, nous aurions alors un grand devoir à remplir, qu'à tout prix nous devrions pousser la guerre jusqu'à la victoire et la victoire jusqu'à la libération des provinces annexées. Dans ces sentiments, qui étaient ceux de l'immense majorité des Français, il n'y avait rien qui fût incompatible." So settled was the conviction that another desperate conflict was only too probable, and so general was the assumption that the Central Empires would stand together, that Poincaré, like his predecessor, frowned on the attempts of Crozier, the French Ambassador in Vienna, to detach Austria from Germany by the granting of substantial loans, and recalled him from his post.<sup>2</sup> The obvious task was to tighten the bonds of the Triple Entente. This conviction was shared by the British Ambassador in Paris, who rejoiced at the change of Ministry. Confiding to the new Premier his anxieties as to the coming spring, he argued that France and England, "whose friendship is equally indispensable to both", should at once get together.<sup>3</sup> The utterance was promptly telegraphed to the Ambassadors at St. Petersburg and Berlin.

The Kaiser's announcement at the opening of the new session of the Reichstag that the German army and navy would be enlarged indicated that the lull which had followed both the Act of Algeciras and the Moroccan Pact of 1909 would not recur. When the Chancellor complained of some of the speeches in the French Chamber on the ratification of the treaties, Jules Cambon reminded him that French feelings had been hurt by the despatch of the *Panther*. "It was a mistake to send it, and a still greater mistake not to withdraw it when negotiations were resumed."<sup>4</sup> "I agree", rejoined Bethmann; "but would you have negotiated if we had not manifested our intentions?" "Certainly", replied the Ambassador. "It is you alone who transformed a negotiation designed to remove a misunderstanding between the two countries into a source of bitterness." Jules Cambon, who had accepted the order of the Red Eagle after the conclusion of the

<sup>1</sup> *Souvenirs*, I, 143-4.

<sup>2</sup> *Souvenirs*, I, ch. 9. Crozier described his years at Vienna in *La Revue de France*, April, May, June 1921.

<sup>3</sup> *D.D.F.* I, 610.

<sup>4</sup> *D.D.F.* II, 53-5, February 18.

pact of 1909, politely declined a higher distinction after the treaties of 1911. When Kiderlen expressed surprise at the susceptibility of France, he interjected that the new military projects were not reassuring. Germany, retorted Kiderlen, was only replying to incessant provocations. "Let us drop the conversation", remarked the Ambassador; "it would carry us too far."

Paul Cambon's reports from London throughout the winter of 1911-12 nervously described the efforts of the Anglo-German Friendship Society and other groups to mend the wires to Berlin. "I do not believe in the final success of the pro-German campaign", he wrote on February 7, 1912; "but since it can disturb French opinion, we must try to tighten the bonds of the *Entente Cordiale*<sup>1</sup>. We need England to consolidate our colonial empire, which used to serve as a source of payment for her aid to our Continental enemies. Without having to revive her old coalition with Germany, she can obstruct our action. Her friendship is precious to us, and whoever desires her friendship must gain her confidence." On the same day the Ambassador telegraphed that Haldane had started for Berlin, not to open negotiations but to explore the ground. To calm the excitement Poincaré proposed to announce that General Wilson had just paid a visit to the Ministry of War. The plan was discouraged by Paul Cambon, whose brother reported a reassuring conversation with Haldane. On February 13, in describing the conversations, Grey declared that the initiative had come not from London but from the Kaiser. Haldane had made it clear that, if Germany attacked France, the British Government reserved complete liberty of action. The Ambassador was cheered by Nicolson's unconcealed disapproval of the visit and his total disbelief in an Anglo-German *détente*. The Prime Minister's declaration in Parliament was equally reassuring. The sincere desire to improve relations, he asserted, in no way involved the sacrifice or weakening of the special relations between each of the two countries with other Powers.

Paul Cambon wrote that in all probability the only result of the visit would be an exchange of declarations that neither Government had ever entertained aggressive designs against the other.<sup>2</sup> That was not unimportant, for the tension had been such that people talked of a war in the spring. The Mission had produced an understanding which was welcomed by

<sup>1</sup> D.D.F. I, 630-3.

<sup>2</sup> D.D.F. II, 82-3.

the business world, and disarmed the section of the Liberal party which attributed Germanophobe tendencies to Grey. On the other hand, if the City welcomed the disappearance of the cloud on the Stock Exchange, the mass of the people retained its distrust of Germany, and Churchill's affirmation of naval supremacy expressed the national sentiment. Poincaré expressed to Bertie his high sense of Grey's loyalty in telling Cambon of the German desire for Zanzibar and Pemba.<sup>1</sup> Had Germany made proposals regarding the Portuguese possessions in Africa, about which some anxiety prevailed in Paris? Bertie replied that, as Poincaré was aware, a secret treaty with Portugal was signed in 1898, but no proposals had recently come from Berlin.

In view of a forthcoming debate Poincaré asked for a formula expressing the real character of the Entente.<sup>2</sup> "While affirming the peaceful intention of the two Governments, I should like to declare that they also agree in the determination to co-operate, in case of need, in the maintenance of the European equilibrium." Grey struck out "*le cas échéant*", proposed the substitution of "peace" for "equilibrium", and suggested a longer version which Poincaré found satisfactory. The latter's declaration on March 15 was as follows: "England has recently had conversations with Germany, like Russia and France some months ago. She has held these conversations in order to safeguard the good relations of the two countries; and we have the assurance that, if England desires to establish friendly relations with all the Powers, there has been and there will be nothing in her conversations with another Government to weaken or relax the cordial relations, the mutual understanding, and the confidence existing between France and England. This understanding, inspired by no sentiment of hostility, no thought of aggression, it is the interest and the wish of both countries to maintain unimpaired in the conviction that it will contribute to assure the maintenance of peace." Grey had poured water into Poincaré's wine, for the declaration was a pale shadow of the original draft.

On the same day Grey informed Cambon how the discussions with Berlin were proceeding.<sup>3</sup> When Metternich had declared that some political assurance was essential to any naval arrangement, he had given him a formula of non-aggression. This formula he now handed to Cambon very

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* VI, 699.

<sup>2</sup> *D.D.F.* II, 102-3, 113-14, 118.

<sup>3</sup> *G. and T.* VI, 716, 726.

confidentially, explaining that it would not go further unless the naval arrangements were satisfactory, and in any case did not impair other agreements. Cambon, reported Grey to Bertie, seemed satisfied with the words. A week later Grey supplied further information. He had told Metternich that he could not promise neutrality, and the Ambassador had rejoined that in that case naval reductions could not be discussed.

This communication produced an unexpected result. On March 27 Bertie begged Poincaré to let him speak as if he were not an Ambassador.<sup>1</sup> Grey had written that Paul Cambon was very satisfied about the proposed Anglo-German declaration. "I am very surprised", continued Bertie, "for, if this declaration has been averted for the moment, it has not been finally refused. Germany requested a promise of benevolent neutrality, which is an absurdity. Grey has declined, but his position is greatly weakened and he is surrounded by champions of a rapprochement. I no longer understand his policy with Germany, and I am uncomfortable. This declaration must be prevented, for there is a risk if the German Government returns to the charge. They will ask us to remain neutral if Germany is attacked. But who can guarantee that one day France, provoked or menaced by a mobilization, may not be forced to take the offensive? It is indispensable that M. Cambon should not appear satisfied. If you speak firmly in London, they will surely hesitate to commit the error which I apprehend." The same arguments were marshalled in private letters to Nicolson.<sup>2</sup>

Poincaré promptly reported this astonishing insubordination to Paul Cambon.<sup>3</sup> The advice, he added, was inspired by too friendly a sentiment and too cogent considerations to be ignored. Conversation with Grey should be resumed, of course without compromising Bertie. The main point was that England should not pledge herself to remain neutral between France and Germany, even if the attack seemed to come from the French side. For instance, could it be called an aggression if a German concentration in the region of Aix-la-Chapelle compelled her to cover the northern frontier by entering Belgium? "On the other hand, trusting to the loyalty of England, and without any written agreement having fettered the discretion of the two Governments, we have consented to our General Staff entering on secret conversations

<sup>1</sup> *D.D.F.* II, 262-3.

<sup>2</sup> *D.D.F.* II, 264-5.

<sup>3</sup> *G. and T.* VI, 729, 735-6.

with the English General Staff and thereby revealing our most important strategic plans. The British Government know that our attitude does not change. No more to-day than yesterday do we ask them to sacrifice in our favour their liberty of action. We entirely admit that they desire to retain it till the last moment. But the least we can ask is that they do not surrender it to our detriment by a declaration of neutrality, which could only incite Germany to renew against France her traditional policy of provocation."

On receiving this important despatch the Ambassador saw Grey at the House of Commons.<sup>1</sup> "I cautioned him against the tendency of certain Ministers who might have been tempted to admit neutrality in the case of aggression against Germany, and I insisted on the impossibility of recognising the real aggressor. He did not appear to be worrying about such tendencies." We learn more of Cambon's conversation from Grey's report. Using Poincaré's words he argued that, with the formula of conditional neutrality proposed to Germany, English hands might be tied when Germany was not really the victim of aggression, though she was clever enough to make it appear that she was. Needless to say Bertie's initiative was not mentioned. After the next Cabinet Nicolson gave Cambon a message that it had decided to stand by the declaration of non-aggression, and that Metternich had been so informed.

Though Bertie's fears that Grey might fall into a German trap were groundless, the Quai d'Orsay was by no means reassured. That the British Government refused to go beyond its formula of non-aggression was good news, but even that formula went much too far for the French taste. Bertie's apprehensions, telegraphed Poincaré on March 30, were only too justified.<sup>2</sup> He had believed that the promise—"England will not attack Germany without provocation"—was only verbal. It now appeared that it was the draft of a written declaration designed as the starting-point of conversations on armaments. If Germany suddenly massed her troops at Aix-la-Chapelle, and if menaced France were obliged to declare war, could England say that Germany was provoked? Before Cambon could put the question to Grey, he visited Paris and found his chief gravely alarmed.<sup>3</sup> He had believed Grey's reply to the neutrality request to be final. Germany's aim was to extract a written declaration which might encourage the foes

<sup>1</sup> II, 266-7 and *G. and T.* VI, 730-1.

<sup>2</sup> *D.D.F.* II, 276.

<sup>3</sup> II, 301-3. Letter to Fleuriau, April 3.

of the *Entente Cordiale* in France by the suspicion that she could not count on England. Berlin might ask for some word which looked innocent enough but which might paralyse her action at a critical moment. It might also ask for the declaration to be transformed into an exchange of notes. The statement that England would make no unprovoked attack on Germany was ambiguous. If Germany attacked France, she could argue that England was not concerned. Even with the best will in the world the British Government might discuss the obligation, and precious time might be lost.

Poincaré's apprehensions were regarded by Cambon as unfounded. "They are not justified by what we know of the sentiments of the English Government and the King. At the moment when the Prince of Wales comes to Paris, when the English and French fleets combine at Nice to celebrate the memory of Queen Victoria and King Edward, when English opinion shows itself more and more resolved to maintain supremacy at sea, one cannot doubt that the *Entente Cordiale* responds to the aspirations of both countries. But we are dealing with very crooked people. Their aim, undeviatingly pursued for eight years, is to create a rift between us which will widen sooner or later into a rupture. Accordingly every word, every step must be weighed, every insinuation analysed, every proposal considered from every angle." Poincaré desired him to put these points to Grey, but, as both Grey and the Ambassador were away for Easter, Nicolson should be consulted. If he shared the French view, he could arrange that nothing was settled before inquiries were made as to the exact meaning of the proposed non-aggression formula. Nicolson understood French anxieties but held them to be unjustified.<sup>1</sup> "It is true that there are plenty of Germanophiles in England and some of them in the Cabinet, but the Government is sound. Sir Edward Grey knows the situation perfectly, and the continuance of the conversations with Count Metternich is a matter of tactics. He does not wish the rupture to come from him."

On the same day that Cambon was writing to Fleuriau from Paris, Bertie addressed an outspoken warning to his chief.<sup>2</sup> After recalling his conversations with the President, Poincaré and Cambon, he continued that they were all preoccupied as to whether the issue of the Anglo-German negotiations might not hamper our freedom of action. "I beg leave to warn His

<sup>1</sup> D.D.F. II, 308-10.

<sup>2</sup> G. and T. VI, 736-7.



Majesty's Government that the non-aggression declaration, whether in the restricted or in the more amplified form contemplated by them, would be a disagreeable surprise to the French public as calculated, and by the German Government intended, to loosen the ties of friendship and confidence between France and England, and to form, in the interest of Germany, bonds restricting the liberty of action of England in a manner detrimental to the interests of France and dangerous to the peace of Europe."

On April 10 Bertie again urged Poincaré to press the British Government through Cambon to refrain from any declaration.<sup>1</sup> Grey had instructed him to announce that his formula would change nothing in the orientation of British policy; but all such assurances would not prevent surprise and emotion, and an irreparable misunderstanding might arise. Bertie, concluded Poincaré's record, believed that the French should speak "avec énergie," and thought that it would produce the desired effect. "I have spoken to M. Poincaré", telegraphed Bertie to Grey, "in the sense of your private telegram of yesterday."<sup>2</sup> He says that if a formula such as has been proposed be signed and published it will be a painful surprise to French public, and will also be viewed with disappointment by some of his colleagues." At certain times the British Ambassador in Paris, like Walter Page in the world war, represented the Government to which he was accredited rather than that by which he was employed.

On April 11 Poincaré reported to Cambon the conversation of the previous day with Bertie, who gave him copies of his despatch to Grey, a private letter to Nicolson, and a telegram from Grey explaining the word "unprovoked".<sup>3</sup> The latter, however, did not say that the idea of a declaration had been abandoned, and the Ambassador continued to fear an ambiguous formula. He reiterated that, if France spoke energetically, he was convinced that his Government would abandon a project which he deplored. "As you know, I entirely share his view. French opinion would be very much upset, and the *Entente Cordiale* might suffer irreparable damage. Sir F. Bertie has clearly explained all that in his letter to Sir Edward Grey. But he tells me that it is necessary to arm the latter against his colleagues, and to let them see that an illusory and misleading declaration is not worth the risk of compromising the Anglo-French entente. You can assure Sir E. Grey that a

<sup>1</sup> D.D.F. II, 328-9.

<sup>2</sup> G. and T. VI, 745.

<sup>3</sup> D.D.F. II, 334-5.

document of this character, however attenuated, will be interpreted in France as a voluntary abandonment of the whole policy followed since 1904. Our entente is consecrated by no diplomatic act ; it rests only on opinion and on the conversations of our General Staff. Anything which would disconcert public sentiment would be of a character to destroy it. England has the same interest as ourselves in maintaining it, and she knows how loyally we observe it." When on April 12 Nicolson joyfully informed Fleuriau that the negotiations for a political and naval agreement had come to an end, for the moment at any rate, Poincaré was immensely relieved.<sup>1</sup> He had not frustrated an Anglo-German agreement, for the negotiations were doomed from the start ; but he had left Grey in no doubt as to the sleepless suspicions of France.

The Agadir crisis had stirred England to the depths, and the Haldane Mission had filled France with alarm. Might not a closer approach at last be possible ? At any rate it was worth trying. On April 18 Cambon reported a conversation with the ever friendly Nicolson.<sup>2</sup> Grey, remarked the latter, had been greatly relieved when the project of a declaration was dropped by the Germans. The Ambassador saw his opportunity. The *Entente Cordiale*, he observed, popular though it was, only rested on the community of interests and reciprocal confidence, and was always at the mercy of the more or less favourable tendencies of the Cabinet. "That is the weakness of the situation of M. Poincaré. More than anybody he is a supporter of the entente with England, and he intends to work it in confidence and loyalty. But he cannot assure important politicians, his Cabinet colleagues, and the directors of French opinion who make inquiries, that there are any ties except those of sympathy. That is enough between two Governments sure of their respective intentions. It is not enough for public opinion, and the adversaries of England in France (there are a few) proclaim that our relations with you offer no security. I therefore ask myself if we could not jointly seek a formula enabling us to reassure troubled or sceptical minds. I know that the British Government cannot tie itself without the assent of Parliament, but there is no need for a treaty. We could content ourselves with an exchange of verbal declarations recorded in notes. That is what we should have done in 1905 with Lord Lansdowne, if the resignation of M. Delcassé had not cut short our conversations."

<sup>1</sup> II, 337-8.

<sup>2</sup> II, 369-71 and G. and T. VI, 747-9.

"Like you", replied Nicolson, "I should like to see our entente consolidated in writing. I believe that Lord Lansdowne would not have refused if a form compatible with the obligations of the Cabinet to Parliament could have been found. But neither Sir E. Grey nor Mr. Asquith could make written engagements without informing the Cabinet, and I am sure that this Radical-Socialist Ministry would not dare to ratify such an engagement." "On the other hand", replied Cambon, "a profound change has taken place in the ideas of some of the most important Ministers. Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Winston Churchill, who at the beginning of the Liberal administration favoured a rapprochement with Germany, have learned from events. They are more than anyone supporters of the *Entente Cordiale*, and they play a preponderant rôle in the Ministry." "True enough", replied Nicolson, "the events of the autumn modified the outlook of the most intelligent Ministers; but there are others who are always looking towards the Labour Party and who would not dare to take any responsibility. Better remain as we are. If something happens, opinion will force the Government to move. Besides, the Cabinet will not last long. It is at the end of its strength, and with the Conservatives you will be able to get something precise." In acknowledging this important despatch Poincaré expressed his satisfaction that Nicolson shared the opinion that the *Entente Cordiale* should be affirmed in writing.<sup>1</sup> Cambon's suspicions remained. When Asquith declared on April 30 that the relations of the British and German Governments were such that they could discuss their mutual interests in a frank and friendly way, the Ambassador asked Nicolson what the words implied.<sup>2</sup> Merely an indication of pacific sentiments, was the answer; no negotiation was in progress. Grey confirmed the reply, adding that the Anglo-German treaty of 1898 concerning the Portuguese colonies was now under review.

No sooner was the nightmare of a non-aggression formula removed than a new alarm occurred. At the beginning of May it was rumoured that Metternich was to be replaced by Marschall, the best horse in Germany's diplomatic stable. Cambon reported that Nicolson shared his alarm, and at his weekly reception on May 15 Bertie found Poincaré in considerable anxiety.<sup>3</sup> "His manner was very earnest and he expressed himself very

<sup>1</sup> D.D.F. II, 414.

<sup>2</sup> II, 434, and G. and T. VI, 752.

<sup>3</sup> G. and T. VI, 753-4.

seriously. He said that it could not be supposed that the transfer to London of an Ambassador who was so successful in making the influence of Germany paramount at Constantinople had not a very great object in view. What M. Poincaré then proceeded to say was so important that I asked His Excellency to repeat his observations so that I might report them to you textually. They were that he felt "de sérieuses inquiétudes à la pensée que la nomination du Baron Marschall indique l'intention de reprendre les pourparlers en vue d'une déclaration ou une formule d'arrangement dont la publication, quelque innocente qu'elle puisse être dans les intentions du Gouvernement anglais, ne le serait certainement pas dans les intentions de l'Allemagne et produirait en France le plus désastreux effet. Il serait très difficile dans ces conditions au Gouvernement français de maintenir l'opinion publique et de conserver à l'entente cordiale toute son efficacité." If territorial changes were contemplated, for instance the cession of Zanzibar, France desired to be kept informed, as England had been told of the Morocco negotiations in 1911.

Bertie accompanied his official despatch with a private letter to his chief. "Poincaré is perturbed at Marschall's appointment. In his opinion it means a renewed and more determined attempt to get us into an entanglement with Germany separating us from France. He hopes that German brutal methods, of which Marschall is a past master and which made him a success at Constantinople, will be repeated in London, for he thinks that Englishmen will not stomach that sort of negotiator, and that those of your colleagues who may have been inclined for an Anglo-German Declaration will realize its dangers and relent." Grey did his utmost both in London and Paris to remove these baseless apprehensions.<sup>1</sup> Marschall's appointment, he believed, had no special significance. No political understanding was being discussed, and if the cession of Zanzibar was to be considered France would be informed.

Though the suspiciousness of France seemed to Grey overdone, Poincaré's warnings had gone home. When Marschall informally suggested a simple declaration that England had no aggressive designs and desired to be friendly, adding that it ought not to excite suspicion in France, Grey replied that this could be said in Parliament at any time.<sup>2</sup> It would have more effect in writing, suggested the Ambassador; but the subject was not pursued. "Of course what Marschall said is quite

<sup>1</sup> D.D.F. III, 31, and G. and T. VI, 755-6.

<sup>2</sup> G. and T. VI, 759-60.

true", wrote Grey to Goschen: "an exchange of writing does mean more than a speech in Parliament. But it is precisely because it does mean more that it might give rise to suspicions." Grey had learned his lesson, and Paris had no further cause of complaint.

## V

At the height of the Agadir crisis the discussions between British and French naval experts begun in 1906 and renewed during the Casablanca incident were resumed. A verbal agreement was reached on September 6, 1911, covering three points—the plan of a secret code, the terms of a secret agreement, and the rôle of France in the Mediterranean. The danger passed, but the idea of co-operation remained. At the end of the year the French Naval Attaché in London paid his first visit to the new Naval Lords.<sup>1</sup> Admiral Bridgeman expressed entire approval of the distribution of the French fleet—high sea squadrons in the Mediterranean, flotillas of destroyers and submarines in the Channel. The Admiralty, he added, would gladly study the partition of the Channel into zones of action in view of a conflict with the common enemy. For the moment the suggestion was not followed up, and the plans of the Admiralty were shaped not by a French agreement but by the German *Novelle*. In introducing the Navy Estimates on March 20, 1912, Churchill announced a redistribution involving the transfer of the base of the Mediterranean squadron from Malta to Gibraltar.

About the same time a report on co-operation between the British and French armies was drawn up by order of Joffre, Chief of the General Staff.<sup>2</sup> The plans of 1906, it recalled, were considerably modified as the result of a Conference on July 20, 1911, between Sir Henry Wilson, Director of Military Operations, and General Dubail. It was the aim of the British Government to extend the scope and accelerate the arrival of the army in the theatre of operations. It was added that the *pourparlers* in no way bound the two Governments. Elaborate details followed as to numbers, railway transport in France, and victualling. The arrangements contemplated by the French General Staff, concluded the report, satisfied the War Office, allowing as they did for the transport and embarkation of the British army with a precision and rapidity comparable to that attained by the French.

<sup>1</sup> D.D.F. I, 328.

<sup>2</sup> II 267-71. Dated March 1912.

The decision to transfer the base of the British Mediterranean fleet to Gibraltar involved political no less than strategic considerations. While the Committee of Imperial Defence was busy on the agenda for a conference in Malta at Whitsun, Cambon informed Nicolson that the French naval authorities desired further conversation with the British Admiralty.<sup>1</sup> Russia had expressed a wish for a Naval Convention with France corresponding to their military agreement, and the French Government had suggested the inclusion of England in the pact. The French Naval Attaché was informed that the subject would be ripe for discussion after the forthcoming conference at Malta. On May 18 Cambon informed Nicolson that Poincaré was uneasy about the Mediterranean.<sup>2</sup> When the Triple Alliance came up for renewal, Germany and Austria would probably require its extension to that sea. That would be a serious matter both for France and England. France would find it difficult to cope with such a combination, particularly in regard to the transport of troops from Algeria. His chief was considering some arrangement with Italy providing for the *status quo* from the Suez Canal to the Straits of Gibraltar. Italy and England might engage to respect and maintain the integrity of each other's possessions. Nicolson made no reply; but Grey told his Ambassador at Rome that nothing could be done till the war in Tripoli was over, since any step would involve the recognition of annexation.

The Malta Conference was exploratory, decisions being reserved for the Cabinet. The British Ambassador in Madrid, after meeting Asquith and Churchill on their way home, assured his French colleague that the principle of a complete entente had dominated the discussions. All the solutions examined assumed absolute collaboration with the French navy. On June 14 Poincaré explained in the Chamber the precise nature of Anglo-French relations. "The British press has recently debated whether it was desirable to transform this entente into an alliance. Opinions differ on both sides of the Channel, but the friendly Governments have not joined in the discussion. Instead of parchment the *Entente Cordiale* has the guarantee of an immense preponderance of opinion in both countries. It leaves entire liberty to the two Governments, but it facilitates the daily settlement of many common matters and the pursuit of co-ordinated actions in problems of general policy. Thus does a Triple Entente contribute to maintain

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. X*, Part 2, 582-3.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 593.

the European equilibrium without anybody being able to take offence at its acts or intentions. While sacrificing no part of our independence we find in this entente, as the two friendly and allied nations find in it, precious elements of success." On June 18 Grey told Cambon that Poincaré's words were very right. The careful phraseology suggested complete satisfaction, but behind the scenes the speaker was working for a closer relationship.

On July 10 Admiral Bridgeman told the French Naval Attaché that the distribution of the fleet had become a question for the Cabinet.<sup>1</sup> The Attaché then described the French plan of concentrating the three cruiser squadrons in the Mediterranean, leaving another type of cruisers with destroyers and submarines in the Channel. Would France be stronger than the Austro-Italian combination? asked Bridgeman. For the present certainly, was the reply. As to the future, seven cruisers were building or on order, and four more were to be laid down in 1913. The Attaché produced the verbal agreement of September 6, 1911, and asked for a modification of the Channel zones, leaving France liberty of action along her whole coastline. On the same day, during the debate on the Foreign Office vote, Grey declared that Great Britain would remain a Mediterranean Power. To Cambon he added that the Government decisions would be announced by Churchill, but we should keep a squadron based on Malta which, in conjunction with the French fleet, would be superior to Italy and Austria combined. A few days later he informed the Ambassador that non-binding conversations could be resumed. Churchill's speech of July 22 on the supplementary naval estimates was music to Cambon's ears.<sup>2</sup> "The English are coming to feel themselves directly menaced by Germany, and this impression can only be to our advantage."

On July 24, in conversation with Nicolson, Cambon commented on the draft agreement given by Churchill to the French Naval Attaché, which involved the transfer of nine-tenths of the French navy to the Mediterranean.<sup>3</sup> The Channel and Atlantic would be exposed to German attack without any guarantee of British support, and the French Admiralty would require some assurance of aid. Churchill minuted on Nicolson's report that the draft had been misunderstood, since it recorded the independent decisions of the two Governments to redistribute their forces. That the

<sup>1</sup> *D.D.F.* III, 235-6.

<sup>2</sup> III, 285-90.

<sup>3</sup> *G. and T.* X, Part 2, 603-5.

matter could not be left there was clear to the French. Cambon complained to Grey of the explicit statement of non-committal. France could not disarm herself in the north without knowing the intentions of England, or at any rate without being told in time to take the necessary steps. Churchill's assertion that the Government had moved independently was incorrect, for France had transferred her fleet as a result of conversations with Fisher. Grey pointed out that the British Government could not pledge itself to military action without reference to Parliament. It was not a question of deciding at that moment, replied Cambon, but France would have to look after all her frontiers if England remained neutral. He therefore suggested an exchange of private notes, providing for consultation. "In a word, if we both think that the best method is an alliance and a military convention, we will adopt it. If we disagree, and one or other declines to fight, each will take his own precautions and we shall not undertake to police the Mediterranean alone." Grey, haunted by the thought of questions in Parliament, replied that he believed a formula could be found envisaging co-operation without the Cabinet being charged with making a secret alliance. He would return to the matter after the holidays.

On July 30 Bertie reported a conversation with Poincaré.<sup>1</sup> The Ambassador was instructed to repeat Grey's declaration to Cambon that the Governments must retain their full freedom of decision. Cambon, he added, was mistaken in believing that the transfer of the larger portion of the French fleet resulted from conversations between the experts. Poincaré admitted it, but explained that it would not have been made if the French Government supposed that, in the event of Germany attacking the Channel or Atlantic ports of France, England would stand aside. Otherwise the conversations would be useless, and France must keep her best ships in the Channel. A military or naval convention should deal only with military or naval matters. Political reservations could only be made by the Governments. What he would like would be some declaration entailing conversations between the Governments directly there appeared to be danger to their interests, so as to decide at once whether the arrangements made between the experts should be put into force.

In a private letter to Grey of the same day Bertie added a few details. He had pressed Poincaré not to hurry. The majority

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. X*, Part 2, 605-7.



of the Cabinet were not inclined to make the declaration he desired. So long as Grey was at his post, there would be no abandonment of the spirit of the Entente. Poincaré argued that its object was to stand together for defence against unprovoked attack and for the balance of power. If it did not mean that England would aid France in the event of Germany attacking the French ports, its value was small. Bertie added that Poincaré was not the only French Foreign Minister who had been dissatisfied with the present uncertain conditions. "Pichon, Cruppi and Selves have one after another deprecated it to me, and of course Clemenceau also. I put them off with generalities and platitudes."

On September 17 Delcassé, the Minister of Marine, forwarded to Poincaré the British draft of July 24 with a covering letter.<sup>1</sup> "It is needless to demonstrate how important it is that the London Cabinet should promptly decide to embody in a firm engagement the military dispositions of which it was the first to recognise the need." The political freedom of the two Governments, ran the preamble, remained intact. France, it was understood, had placed almost the whole of her battle-fleet in the Mediterranean, leaving her Atlantic seaboard to the care of flotillas. Great Britain had concentrated her battle-fleets in home waters, leaving in the Mediterranean a strong containing force of battle cruisers and torpedo-craft. "These dispositions have been made independently." The zones of operations in the Channel and the Mediterranean were mapped out. The French Admiralty accepted the main points of the plan, with the significant addition that the allied forces should be commanded in the Channel by an English, in the Mediterranean by a French Admiral.

Two days later Cambon reported that the announcement of the despatch of France's northern squadron to the Mediterranean was interpreted by the British press as the proof of a naval understanding between France, England and Russia.<sup>2</sup> This was not advantageous. Was it wise to evacuate the Atlantic and the Channel without a guarantee of help in those waters? The decision, as a matter of fact, had not been authorised by the Government. Cambon told Grey that the transfer of French ships was a temporary step in connection with the manoeuvres, and that it could not be definitive till France knew where she stood. He then proposed, as a personal suggestion,

<sup>1</sup> *D.D.F.* III, 506-11.

<sup>2</sup> III, 523-5, and *G. and T.* X, Part 2, 611.

the following formula. "If either Government had reasons to apprehend an act of aggression by a third Power, or complications endangering peace, they would discuss the situation and seek means of jointly ensuring the maintenance of peace and averting any attempt at aggression." The formula, commented Grey, in no way modified the existing situation. True, rejoined Cambon, but it was dependent on his goodwill. There was no written understanding. France wished to be assured of the support of the whole Government. Grey promised to consult Asquith, who described it as harmless and almost a platitude. Poincaré proposed a more definite statement which found no favour. "Le Gouvernement de la République et le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique, prévoyant le cas où l'un d'eux aurait un motif grave d'appréhender, soit l'aggression d'une tierce Puissance, soit quelque événement menaçant pour la paix générale, conviennent qu'ils délibéreront immédiatement sur les moyens d'agir en commun à l'effet de prévenir l'aggression et de sauvegarder la paix."

On October 16 Grey told Cambon that Asquith ruled out a secret exchange of notes and, in view of repeated declarations by the British Government, thought a written agreement needless. After further pressure from Cambon the Prime Minister yielded on condition that the documents should be private letters, and that they should be approved by the Cabinet. After the Cabinet discussion on October 30 Grey gave Cambon a draft almost identical with his own, adding that he had adopted the proposition of Lansdowne.<sup>1</sup> "It is true that Sir Edward Grey is inspired by the tradition of Lord Lansdowne", commented the Ambassador, "and that, if his colleagues shared his ideas, he would go beyond the proposed exchange of letters. But with the present Cabinet this exchange is the end, and could only be developed in the event of an imminent peril, whereas, with the Conservative Cabinet, Lord Lansdowne's communication was only a start and was to lead to a closer entente, if not an alliance." Poincaré pronounced the draft acceptable, though a little vague; but he desired the addition of a sentence: "si les mesures comportaient une action les ententes de nos Etats-Major produiraient leur effet." Grey consulted his colleagues, who felt that, since the plans were only provisional, it was inconvenient to mention them as if they were definitive. He therefore suggested the following formula: "If these measures involved action, the plans of the

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. X*, Part 2, 612-3, and *D.D.F.* IV, 318-22.

General Staffs would at once be taken into consideration and the Governments would then decide what effect should be given to them." Cambon approved. The long discussion was over. On November 22-3 the Grey-Cambon letters were exchanged.

Though there was no promise of assistance, Poincaré was delighted with what he had secured. "I have appreciated the high value of these documents", he wrote to Cambon.<sup>1</sup> "The strategic studies on which the General Staffs of the two countries are secretly at work have henceforth the explicit approbation of the British Government. The Government of the Republic is grateful for the mastery you have shown in this delicate negotiation." In sending copies of the letters to his colleagues, the Ministers of War and Marine, he added: "The importance of these documents will not escape you." In Grey's eyes the relationship had been defined but in no way changed. The Quai d'Orsay's interpretation was different. France, it was felt, had turned the growing German menace in the North Sea to good account.

Meanwhile, on November 8, the British Admiralty communicated a draft agreement deferring the Mediterranean problem, but accepting in principle France's Channel proposals of September 17, subject to British flotillas being allowed to familiarize themselves with the technicalities of navigation near the French coast.<sup>2</sup> French flotillas would of course receive similar privileges. "It would be important that such facilities should be unostentatiously afforded and used on both sides." The French Admiralty accepted the principle of English flotillas in French water and ports in their allotted zone of operations at intervals of three months with reciprocity, the exchange of maps and nautical documents, the exchange of officers and signallers in time of war. A week later the French Naval Attaché communicated to the Admiralty acceptance in principle of the British proposals. The English Naval Staff, he was told, would work out the details. Since the Admiralty gave priority to the Channel agreement, the Naval Attaché hoped that everything would be settled in two or three months. He added that it was accelerating construction. Though the Grey-Cambon letters remained a secret, the redistribution of the French and English fleets told its own tale. The entente was moving steadily towards an alliance in all but name. When the Austrian Ambassador complained of

<sup>1</sup> IV, 559-60.

<sup>2</sup> IV, 415-8, 543-6.

the concentration of French naval power in the Mediterranean, Poincaré explained that it was a purely French decision and had no aggressive aim.<sup>1</sup> The Ambassador was unconvinced that England had not been consulted.

## VI

Russia's support of her ally during the Agadir crisis was more tepid than that of England, and her unwillingness to fight for a purely French interest was unconcealed. Moreover, though the alliance remained the foundation of French policy and it was the ambition of every Foreign Minister to strengthen its ties, the Potsdam flirtation was angrily resented in Paris, and each kept a jealous eye on the contacts of the other. At the end of 1911 Iswolsky inquired if it was true that loans to Austria and Hungary were being considered.<sup>2</sup> To help them to overcome their financial difficulties, he pointed out, would be to destroy one of the principal guarantees of peace. Occasional friction was inevitable in such a partnership, and during Poincaré's year of office it was almost incessant. Iswolsky was rather untrustworthy, and Sazonoff, though honourable and well-meaning, was inexperienced and short-sighted. Yet contact was never lost. On December 22, 1911, the Military Attaché in St. Petersburg reported that he had conferred with the War Minister and the Chief of Staff.<sup>3</sup> The former, or, if preferred, the President of the Council was prepared to sign the *procès-verbal* of the conversation of August 31 between the French and Russian Chiefs of Staff. Hitherto the reports of the annual meetings had not been signed by a Minister. General Jilinski, the Chief of Staff, desired revision of the text of the Military Convention, in order to avoid the need of reproducing every year the same observations, but he had no wish to change its spirit. The French Military Attaché agreed and drafted a new convention. At the same moment the Grand Duke Nicholas was invited to attend the French manœuvres in May 1912. The political and military importance of such a visit from the probable Commander-in-Chief in the event of war was obvious. The invitation was warmly approved by the Tsar.

Poincaré was only just installed when on January 24, 1912, the Russian Ambassador attended his reception at the Quai d'Orsay. "M. Iswolsky evinced the ardent desire that, in

<sup>1</sup> A. IV, 457-8, September 21.

<sup>2</sup> D.D.F. I, 387.

<sup>3</sup> I, 387-8.

presence of eventualities in the East, France and Russia should maintain the closest contact and consider together all possible contingencies. M. Poincaré replied that he entirely shared his feeling, and that he would be at his disposal to join in studying possible solutions."<sup>1</sup> Such was the Premier's bare record of a brief exchange which might be a mere expression of courtesy but might also be something more. The *démarche*, he telegraphed to his Ambassador in St. Petersburg, offered a welcome opportunity to ascertain Russia's views on the different aspects of the Eastern question. One of the first points to clear up was whether she had tied her hands in any way.

On February 5 Sazonoff told the French Ambassador that hitherto he had only made a communication to the French Government on an understanding in view of complications in the East.<sup>2</sup> The conversation should for the time remain confidential. England should join in the discussion later, and later still the other Powers. They should jointly examine various eventualities and map out, if not decide, what each should do. "In my opinion", concluded the Ambassador's telegram, "there is no point in telling England from day to day of the conversation initiated by Russia, of which the real purpose is not yet clear. At present we have no decision to make: we have only to listen. Equally it is not for us to press the Russian Government. At present M. Sazonoff has only touched on secondary questions. One feels that he hesitates to reveal himself, perhaps because he is not sure that in opening himself to us he may not be opening himself to others."

Russia showed a little more of her hand when the Minister of Marine informed the French Ambassador that the Emperor would be glad to see direct relations between the Naval staffs such as had existed between the military staffs since 1892.<sup>3</sup> Poincaré forwarded the telegram to Delcassé, expressing his approval and asking for his colleague's opinion. Delcassé naturally concurred, for the Naval Attaché in Paris had spoken of it some months before and Delcassé had suggested a Russian initiative. The relations between the armies included the annual meeting of the Chiefs of the General Staff since 1903, the exchange of information on the sphere of operations, and telegraphic contact by secret code between Bizerta and Sebastopol. The first two, in the opinion of the Admiralty, might be extended to the navies. To admit Russian officers into the

<sup>1</sup> I, 530, 558.<sup>2</sup> I, 614 and 626-8.<sup>3</sup> I, 616, 620, II, 17, 322

French schools was undesirable. "If the principle of more intimate communications is accepted", concluded the Memorandum, "an exchange of ideas between the Chiefs of Staff and the Naval Attachés would allow greater precision on the basis of collaboration. But we should not forget that our navy can give more than it could receive." The tone of the Memorandum was not effusive, for the new Russian fleet was not in being. Two months later the Russian Minister of Marine told the Ambassador that the Russian and French Admiralties agreed that their Chiefs of Staff should enter into communication like their army colleagues.

On February 14 Sazonoff handed to the Ambassador the programme for the conversations he desired.<sup>1</sup> The document, reported Louis, was not official. The topics were a political crisis in Turkey, Austrian activity in the Sanjak or Albania, and a conflict between Turkey and a Balkan Power (Montenegro, Greece, Bulgaria). The practical issues were: How far should events be allowed to go? What moral influences on the actors were available? By what measures could diplomatic action be supported? These questions were the largest that Russia could raise, but it was better to examine them in academic conversations than to risk being dragged along by events. At this stage the Ambassador was unaware of the negotiations for a Balkan League under the auspices of Russia.

On February 8 Millerand, the Minister of War, informed the French Military Attaché in St. Petersburg that the copy of the report of the Conference of August 31, 1911, had been signed by his predecessor.<sup>2</sup> It was very desirable that the copy of the Russian Chief of Staff should be signed by the Russian Minister of War. The documents should then be exchanged. His desire was promptly fulfilled. The Chief of Staff had feared that the Tsar might object to the promise to take the offensive about the fifteenth day, but he had made no remark. "Thus all is well", observed Jilinski. The Attaché seized the occasion to urge the acceleration of mobilisation. The General replied that he was working at it, and that the General Staff was looking into the railways.

Poincaré desired the closest possible intimacy with Russia. But he was resolved that France should not play second fiddle, and, like other French statesmen, he was strongly opposed to the re-opening of the Eastern Question. On March 13 he

<sup>1</sup> II, 32-3, 37.

<sup>2</sup> II, 2-3.

inquired of Iswolsky about Russia's military preparations in the Caucasus and asked what they meant.<sup>1</sup>

Poincaré : "The Government of the Republic has always interpreted our alliance in the sense that every initiative not envisaged in the pact itself, that is to say every enterprise of general policy which does not represent a *riposte* to an attack or a threat from Germany, imposes on the two allies the obligation of preliminary consultation. M. Sazonoff has recently declared to M. Louis that the Imperial Government would take no step in the East without giving us notice. But it is not enough that you give us notice : we must give our consent.

Iswolsky : Of course. It was in order to reach agreement that he gave the Ambassador a *questionnaire* which he wished me secretly to discuss with you.

Poincaré : I am quite ready to examine with you the eventualities discussed in the *questionnaire*. But the gravity of the problems—for nothing less than the European equilibrium is involved—compels me to inform my colleagues. In any case I must tell you here and now that France remains firmly attached to her traditional policy in the East, namely the integrity of the Ottoman Empire and the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Balkans."

In reporting the conversation to St. Petersburg Poincaré invited Sazonoff to formulate the views of the Russian Government on the hypotheses in the *questionnaire* of February 14, namely an internal crisis in Turkey, Austrian action in the Sanjak or Albania, and war between Turkey and a Balkan state. "The joint examination of these grave issues is fully authorised by the secret agreement of August 9, 1899. The two Governments then virtually decided that, ever mindful of the preservation of general peace, they attach no less importance to the maintenance of the balance of power." The Ambassador was to bear in mind the precedent of December 1895, when the Russian Government inquired what help it might expect if, owing to the initiative of a third Power, it was driven to military intervention in the East. The French Government had replied that only some great national interest such as Alsace-Lorraine could justify in the eyes of the French people engagements involving military action. In the course of the interview Iswolsky declared that his Government had not recently had any conversation with Austria about the Balkan question, and that Russian policy towards Italy was shaped by

<sup>1</sup> II, 198-9.

the fear of seeing Italian action paralysed in the Balkans. Poincaré telegraphed that the Cabinet was ready to discuss the *questionnaire*, adding that it would take no operative decision without consulting London.

On March 20 Louis informed Sazonoff of Poincaré's desire to visit Russia when his Parliamentary duties allowed.<sup>1</sup> The Foreign Minister was delighted, and suggested the beginning of August. Replying to interpellations in the Chamber Poincaré said that the Moroccan question had furnished many opportunities of measuring the strength of the bonds so closely uniting France and Russia. "Our alliance is a guarantee for the peace of the world whose value we know and which we shall not allow to be weakened." On the following day Sazonoff told Louis that in a speech to the Duma he proposed to say that the two Governments were in continuous contact on all questions. This was not enough for Poincaré, who successfully urged an express reference to the alliance similar to his own, since French opinion was a little disquieted about Russia's rapprochement with Italy and her policy in the Near East.

On June 5 Iswolsky told Poincaré, with an embarrassed air, that the Tsar proposed to meet the Kaiser in Finnish waters.<sup>2</sup> His chief hoped that France would not misunderstand this non-political incident. The French Government, replied Poincaré, being aware of the treaties, was convinced of the fidelity of the ally; yet public opinion would be profoundly disturbed, and his forthcoming visit to St. Petersburg would not redress the balance. Louis was instructed to counterwork the meeting and to seek an audience of the Tsar. The instructions seemed to the Ambassador impracticable. The Imperial family counted on their annual cruise in Finnish waters, and to cancel it would not prevent a visit to Peterhof. Poincaré's alarm increased on learning that, as the Kaiser was to be accompanied by his Chancellor, Sazonoff would doubtless attend his sovereign. "We are bound to ask in advance for a formal assurance that no political question relating to the Near East or any other subject will be considered independently of us." The ideas of the two Governments would have to be co-ordinated, and an agreement reached with England regarding the possible solutions of the Tripoli war. "Any other procedure would risk, if not the destruction of the Triple Entente, at any rate the impression in Europe that it was weakened and

<sup>1</sup> II, 231-3.

<sup>2</sup> III, 91-3, 96-7.



compromised." The French Premier never minced his words.

Grey rejected Poincaré's first draft of a declaration by the Triple Entente as tending to form two groups of Powers in regard to the Tripoli war, but he desired a promise from Sazonoff not to enter into any separate engagement about it.<sup>1</sup> He accepted a milder declaration stressing the need, in the interests of peace, that the five Powers should concert before any step was taken. A friendly intervention of the Powers for the restoration of peace should be strictly confined to the Tripoli dispute, and they should sign a pact of disinterestedness before the deliberations began. Never would Russia declare herself disinterested in the Near East, replied Sazonoff sharply.<sup>2</sup> It would be an abdication, and what use her adversaries would make of it! The Tsar was equally firm. Why announce a project of intervention at this stage? Why should France think that, if an understanding of the Entente Powers was not quickly reached, Russia would settle with Germany? "No entente is possible independently of you." He did not understand why French opinion needed to be continually reassured in regard to the solidity of the alliance, "to which we hold as much as you." Poincaré was disagreeably surprised at the reply. The proposed general pact of disinterestedness, he pointed out, only applied to the consequences of the Tripoli war. The offending phrase was omitted and the publication of the accord postponed. The secret agreement reached on June 25 declared that the French, Russian and British Governments, holding the same views on the conditions in which at an opportune moment they could usefully co-operate in a restoration of peace between Italy and Turkey, considered that a friendly intervention of the Powers would be fruitless unless strictly confined to the dispute which produced the conflict. The three Governments were also agreed in recognising that, to achieve their pacific aims, it was essential that the five Powers should agree before any step was taken. It was an anaemic formula, but it seemed better than nothing.

On June 26 Poincaré wired instructions to Louis for his audience with the Tsar.<sup>3</sup> He was to explain the complaints of Sazonoff and Iswolsky about himself (for the former had recently asked for another Ambassador), to describe France's attitude in the Near East, to welcome the entry of Russia into the Chinese *consortium*, and to thank him for the invitation to

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. IX*, Part 1, 397-404.

*D.D.F. III*, 144-6, 172.

<sup>2</sup> *III*, 173-4, 183, 188-9.

the Premier. The audience was entirely satisfactory. The Tsar was extremely friendly, and he denied that he had any complaint against the Ambassador. Whatever subjects might be discussed with the Kaiser, nothing of importance would result. "No change in Russian policy is possible. Do not worry about what is unbreakable. . . . Let us always act together, and let us always keep in with England." Louis asked whether he was apprehensive of the little Balkan states. "We shall strive to maintain peace", was the reply, "but it will probably be in vain. It would be too good a chance for the Balkan peoples. That is the sole danger I foresee."

The Russian reports on the dreaded meeting of the Emperors at Baltic Port were reassuring.<sup>1</sup> Bethmann desired no change—merely the continuation of the good relations established at Potsdam. A few days later the Chiefs of the General Staffs held their annual meeting at Paris and examined the Military Convention of 1892.<sup>2</sup> The words in the preamble "defensive war", they agreed, should not be taken to mean "a war conducted defensively." On the contrary a vigorous and simultaneous offensive was an absolute necessity. In view of the development of the German lines in the West, Joffre urged the acceleration of Russian mobilisation and concentration by the development of railways. In the event of war the defeat of the German armies was the primary aim: Austria's forces were a secondary consideration.

While contact between the military chiefs was a regular feature of the alliance, naval co-operation was only arranged in the summer of 1912. The destruction of the Russian fleet in 1905 had deprived the question of actuality for several years. But when the army had been reconstituted, the financial position had improved, and the Agadir crisis had once more revealed the fragility of peace, the rebuilding of the navy was taken in hand. A plan was agreed on at Paris on July 16.<sup>3</sup> By the first article the fleets were to co-operate whenever the alliance involved the combined action of the armies. The second authorised the Chiefs of Staff to correspond directly, exchange all information, study hypothetical solutions and concert strategic programmes. By the third the two Chiefs were to meet at least once a year and draw up a report of their conversations. By the fourth the naval convention was

<sup>1</sup> III, 219-21, 239-40, 252-3.

<sup>2</sup> III, 258-64, July 13.

<sup>3</sup> III, 270, Pribram, *The Secret Treaties of Austria-Hungary*, II, 222-5.

assimilated as regards its duration and secrecy to the military agreements. The Tsar, reported Sazonoff to Louis, was delighted at his Admiral's report, and he himself was equally pleased. When the German Ambassador requested explanations, he replied that as allies France and Russia had the right to provide for all eventualities, but that the pacific character of the alliance was in no way modified.

## VII

Though the Naval Convention symbolised the ever increasing intimacy of the alliance, Poincaré's journey to St. Petersburg in August 1912 was more than an act of courtesy, for both parties had complaints to make. "Despite all his failings," wrote Iswolsky on June 20, "he is a strong personality.<sup>1</sup> If, which God forbid, an international crisis were to occur it is very important for us to have him absolutely on our side and to make use of his energy and resolution. For this it is necessary to reckon with his morbid *amour-propre*; but you will be able to convince yourself that he is absolutely straight." The visit, reported Buchanan, was a great success, and he made a most excellent impression on everyone with whom he came in contact.<sup>2</sup> His conversations with the Emperor, Kokovtsoff and Sazonoff, he wired home, had been satisfactory on all questions, and the official communiqué issued on August 17 breathed unity and cordiality. His detailed report to his colleagues painted a less alluring picture.<sup>3</sup> He was shocked to discover that the Bulgar-Serb pact, which had been concluded under Russian patronage, and the existence though not the terms of which had been communicated to France at the time, was a veritable *convention de guerre*. It was too late to undo the mischief, and he realized in a flash that in all probability a Balkan conflict was at hand. He had a right to resent the secrecy with which a political transaction of the first magnitude had been carried out, and to contrast it with France's scrupulous observance of the obligations of partnership.

Except for the question of the Balkan League the conversations were harmonious. When Sazonoff complained of France's tepid attitude in the Tripoli war, Poincaré explained why, with her African subjects, she had to observe strict neutrality. He defended his Ambassador against the Foreign

<sup>1</sup> *Iswolsky*, II, 162-3.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T.* IX, Part 1, 615-7.

<sup>3</sup> *D.D.F.* III, 339-46.

Minister's complaints, and the incident was declared to be closed.<sup>1</sup> Passing to the latest meeting of the Chiefs of Staff, he urged the development of Russian railways to the German and Austrian frontiers. He also suggested the confirmation of the new naval agreement by an exchange of letters, which Sazonoff approved. The same topics were discussed with Kokovtsoff and the Tsar. The President of the Council complained that Louis was unsociable, but expressed no desire for his recall. It was now Poincaré's turn to complain of Iswolsky—his tactlessness, his intrigues with Tittoni, the incautious utterances of his wife. He had estranged the aristocracy, the Republicans, the press, in a word the whole of public opinion. He and his wife, rejoined Kokovtsoff, were snobs and bunglers, and he believed him to be subject to financial influences. The President of the Council approved the consecration of the naval convention by a diplomatic agreement. He wished the two Governments could control the conversations of the Chiefs of Staff. "These gentlemen would be capable of committing us too light-heartedly. They talk and talk, without considering financial possibilities or diplomatic factors." The Tsar also approved an exchange of letters concerning the naval convention, and spoke warmly of the alliance as of something beyond discussion. The more he saw of Poincaré, remarked Sazonoff to the Austrian Ambassador, the more he liked him.<sup>2</sup> He was a man of outstanding intellect and great resolution. He knew exactly what he wanted. But he was often very stubborn (*très tête*).

Sazonoff's lengthy report to his master concluded with a thumbnail sketch of his distinguished visitor.<sup>3</sup> "I feel bound to say that I was very glad of the opportunity to meet M. Poincaré and to enter into personal contact, all the more since our exchange of views left the impression that in him Russia possesses a reliable and true friend, endowed with a statesman-like understanding that is exceptional and with an indomitable will. In the event of a crisis in international relations it would be very desirable that at the head of the Government of our allies should stand, if not M. Poincaré himself, at any rate some

<sup>1</sup> The case against Poincaré in connection with Georges Louis is set forth in Gouttenoire de Toury, *Poincaré a-t-il voulu la Guerre?* and Judet, *Georges Louis*. The reply is in his *Souvenirs*, I, ch. 12 and II, ch. 11. The recall of the Ambassador, he asserts, was due exclusively to Sazonoff, and there was never any difference in policy between him and Paris.

<sup>2</sup> *A. IV*, 362.

<sup>3</sup> *Iswolsky*, II, 219-26.

personality possessing the same resolution and equally free from all fear of responsibility." They were almost the same words as Iswolsky had used a few weeks before.

While Poincaré was in St. Petersburg Berchtold called the attention of the Powers to the increasing danger of war in the Balkans, and invited them to join in a discussion of two proposals. The first was to advise Turkey to adopt a policy of progressive decentralisation which would provide the Christian nationalities with the necessary guarantees. The second was to urge the Balkan states to await the results of this policy. It was a well-meant effort, but it came too late to influence the course of events. Since the Turkish Government, ran the French reply, had spontaneously decided to accord certain privileges to the Albanians, France would advise it to make similar concessions to the Serbs, the Bulgars and the Greeks.<sup>1</sup> She could not take the responsibility of provoking a modification of the *status quo* in the Balkans, but, subject to the qualification, she was ready to discuss decentralization. Needless to say she would take counsel with Russia and England. Since the Turkish Ambassador declared that Turkey intended to extend the same privileges to the other nationalities, Poincaré suggested that the Powers should merely encourage her in this course, thus giving satisfaction to Berchtold and avoiding the appearance of intervention.

The Premier confided his anxieties to Millerand, his Minister of War.<sup>2</sup> What would Austria do if a crisis in the Balkans occurred? At the moment she was pacific; but she would hardly remain passive in case of a general insurrection in Albania or Macedonia, Italian naval action in the Dardanelles or Salonica, a Turkish conflict with Montenegro or Bulgaria. Would she merely reoccupy the Sanjak? Would she march on Uskub? Would she take action in Albania? What precautions would she take on the Russian and Italian frontiers? What military aid could she expect from Roumania? The General Staff replied that Austrian action in the Balkans would be a dangerous gamble, and that Germany would probably veto the adventure.

The apprehensions of France increased with the growing anxieties of Russia. Sazonoff, wired Louis, alarmed by the state of opinion in Bulgaria, desired the Triple Entente to consider common action for the maintenance of peace.<sup>3</sup> Poincaré was clear that the first step was for the three Powers

<sup>1</sup> D.D.F. III, 390-1.

<sup>2</sup> III, 391-2, 439-40.

<sup>3</sup> III, 419-22.

separately to encourage Turkey to extend her Albanian concessions to the other races. It was essential, in his opinion, to avoid the appearance of intervention. He urged prudence at Sofia and suspended the consideration of a loan. At Cetinje and Constantinople he counselled the withdrawal of troops from the frontiers. At the end of August the Russian Chargé reported growing excitement in Bulgaria, and his chief proposed consultation between the Powers of the Triple Entente to avoid surprises. Poincaré asked what measures Sazonoff had in view, and proposed a Conference. Sazonoff only favoured the suggestion if it was certain that Austria had a similar project in mind.

Poincaré had no intention of being hustled by his ally. In a frank talk with Bertie on September 11 he explained that he fully appreciated the danger of putting pressure on the Porte.<sup>1</sup> When Sazonoff and Iswolsky had lamented that he was not sufficiently pro-Italian in the Tripoli conflict, he had replied that strict neutrality was dictated by France's large and varied interests in the Ottoman Empire. He had spoken in the same sense in regard to the Balkan question, and he was not going to imperil French interests by being dragged into rash action at Constantinople. Yet he was well aware that danger might come in other ways, and he proceeded to define his attitude. The French Government, he informed Iswolsky, was carefully reviewing all possible eventualities.<sup>2</sup> Some event, such as the destruction of Bulgaria by Turkey or an Austrian attack on Servia, might compel Russia to take military action. In such a case France's energetic diplomatic support was secured, but not military action. If, however, the conflict with Austria led to German intervention, the French Government would recognise the *casus foederis* and would not hesitate a moment to fulfil her obligations. "France is undoubtedly thoroughly pacific and wants no war. But a German intervention against Russia would at once change her mood, and the Government's decision to render military support to Russia would certainly be approved by Parliament and public opinion."

In the middle of September Iswolsky reported that his chief had urged Turkey, in order to avert serious complications, to introduce reforms in Macedonia without delay.<sup>3</sup> Poincaré replied that he could only support the step if the other Powers followed suit, and he proceeded to put forward a plan of his

<sup>1</sup> G. and T. IX, Part I, 688.

<sup>2</sup> Iswolsky, II, 249-52, September 11.

<sup>3</sup> D.D.F. III, 513-4, 517-8, 549-50.

own. The Governments of France, England and Russia, ran the preamble, equally desirous of safeguarding peace and maintaining the *status quo* in the Balkan peninsula, believed that only collective action by the Great Powers could avert the grave events which threatened the tranquillity and equilibrium of the Near East. The three Governments therefore proposed to the German and Austrian Governments the following suggestions:

I. The Powers would simultaneously advise the four Balkan States not to disturb the peace or upset the *status quo*.

II. If this advice were rejected, the Powers would join in the attempt to localize and terminate the conflict, informing the states concerned that victory would bring them no territorial advantage.

III. If more energetic measures should be required, such as a military or naval demonstration, the Powers would only participate after consultation.

IV. The Powers should urge Turkey to introduce without delay the administrative reforms justly demanded by the Christian races.

The first two clauses were approved by Grey and Sazonoff, who was on a visit to England, but not the third and fourth. Nicolson told Cambon that he thought Grey preferred separate communications. Poincaré was disappointed.<sup>1</sup> It was still possible, he believed, to prevent a war if the Powers consented to immediate collective action or to an Austro-Russian *démarche*. "France is absolutely ready either at once to take the initiative of a collective *démarche* or to support any initiative of the kind." At this stage no statesman in Europe was working harder to keep the peace.

Sazonoff reached Paris on October 3 on his return from England, and on the following day Poincaré reported to his Ambassadors in London, Vienna and Berlin.<sup>2</sup> Russia would join in a collective *démarche* or in an Austro-Russian *démarche* in the name of Europe. The Powers would inform the Balkan States and Turkey :

I. That they energetically condemn any measure leading to war.

II. That if war should come, they would forbid any territorial changes in the Balkan peninsula.

III. That they would take in hand reforms in European Turkey, while not infringing the integrity of Turkey.

Kiderlen had passed the phrase "take in hand", and was

<sup>1</sup> IV, 20-1.

<sup>2</sup> IV, 41-3.

sure of Austria's acceptance. If England approved, the step could be taken. The British Government was willing that Russia and Austria, in view of their special interests, should act in the Balkan capitals, but not at Constantinople. The change was promptly accepted by Poincaré. At Berchtold's wish the reservation of the Sultan's sovereignty was embodied in the plan.<sup>1</sup> If the British Government now made objections, wrote Poincaré to Cambon, it would become responsible for a delay fraught with grave possibilities. Agreement was complete between France, Russia and Austria, and the adhesion of Germany was not in doubt. Since the text reserved the sovereignty of the Sultan and the integrity of his Empire, the Porte could not take offence.

While the last touches were being put to this scheme, the Turkish Government informed the Powers of its decision to introduce the necessary reforms on the basis of complete equality between the races of European Turkey. Grey suggested that the five Powers should reply that they took note of the declaration and would discuss with it the actual steps. Poincaré was ready to accept Grey's plan, but argued that the note of the Powers should be collective.<sup>2</sup> "Isolated action always suggests both to the Porte and the Balkan States that the Powers are not entirely agreed and that some of them have *arrière-pensées*." The Turkish gesture in no way diminished his desire for the presentation of his plan to the Balkan capitals. At the eleventh hour Bertie announced Grey's wish to renew the guarantee of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>3</sup> Poincaré had no objection if the Porte were warned that it could not hope for territorial aggrandisement from a war; but it would be inopportune, he felt, before the action of the Powers in regard to reforms had produced its full effect. It was too late. The Tripoli war was nearing its close, and the opportunity of the Balkan States was too good to miss. Poincaré's efforts were doomed from the start, but they form an honourable chapter in his career and they were not all thrown away. A bolt had been drawn against the spread of the conflagration and the entanglement of the Great Powers, wrote Kiderlen. "That is the merit of Poincaré."<sup>4</sup>

## VIII

The conflict began on October 8 when Montenegro declared war against Turkey. Poincaré told Schoen that he regarded it

<sup>1</sup> IV, 60-1.

<sup>2</sup> IV, 70-2.

<sup>3</sup> IV, 85, October 8.

<sup>4</sup> G.P. XXXIII, 200.



as the task of France and Germany to continue to work hand in hand in a tranquillising and mediating sense, and that he was ready to co-operate with zeal.<sup>1</sup> They should strive to increase the confidence between their respective allies and to restrain them from unilateral action. In due course they might collaborate in the restoration of peace. Though the other Balkan states were sure to follow Montenegro's lead, he hurried on the presentation of the collective notes to the Balkan capitals and Constantinople in order to affirm the solidarity of the Powers. They produced no effect, for each side believed it could win. For the remainder of his term of office he was haunted by the spectre of a European conflagration. His task was complicated by the fact that, while striving to localise the conflict, he had at all costs to keep the Russian alliance in repair.

On October 10 he was informed of the Bulgarian Premier's reply to the Austro-Russian *démarche*.<sup>2</sup> Did the promise of the Powers to "take in hand" the realisation of the reforms mean an effective control, and, if so, how would it be exercised? Berchtold desired Poincaré's aid in replying to the question, but the latter felt that large issues were involved. The joint *démarche* at Constantinople of the same day appealed to Article 23 of the Treaty of Berlin and the Ottoman law of 1880. Since the latter document consisted of 327 articles and many changes had taken place, the discussion could only be undertaken in a conference of the Powers. Moreover, the military preparation of Turkey and the Balkan states revealed the danger to peace not only in the Balkans but in Europe. The French Ambassadors in London and St. Petersburg were accordingly instructed to suggest a *réunion diplomatique* for the study of the reforms instituted by the law of 1880, under the express reserve of the territorial integrity of the Turkish Empire.

Grey approved the idea, recognising the advantages of drawing Russia and Austria into council. Turkey's reply to the joint *démarche* should be awaited. If the immediate discussion of the reforms was accepted, she should take part. If she declined discussion, the Ambassadors at Constantinople might sketch out the regime to be established on the return of peace. This was not enough for Poincaré. The subject, he wired to Cambon, was too large for a *réunion* of Ambassadors and required an international gathering.<sup>3</sup> If war broke out,

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIII, 189, October 9.

<sup>2</sup> D.D.F. IV, 104-5.

<sup>3</sup> IV, 125-6, 141-3, 146-7.

the Powers should agree to early mediation, which in turn would be the normal prelude to a conference. "For me the chief thing is always to maintain the solidarity of Europe and to smooth away the differences of view which, if they arose, might involve dangerous discussions." Grey having approved his programme, Sazonoff should follow suit, so that it could be submitted to Berlin and Vienna. Russia, however, was much less disinterested than her ally. Russian opinion, declared Iswolsky, would accuse the Government of desiring to rob the Balkan states of their prospective victories: only the principle of a conference should be accepted. Sazonoff explained that he opposed an immediate conference because he believed war to be inevitable. It might be useful later on.

Disappointed but not dismayed, Poincaré fell back on a plan of mediation after the first battles had begun to exhaust the belligerents.<sup>1</sup> On October 15 his Ambassadors in Vienna, Berlin, St. Petersburg and London were instructed to propose the following plan:

I. The Powers should agree to offer mediation at an opportune moment.

II. If it succeeded, an international conference should promptly prepare a scheme of reforms for European Turkey.

III. If mediation failed, the conference should nevertheless meet to prepare measures in the general interest of Europe.

IV. Nothing should be done to infringe the sovereignty of the Sultan or the integrity of the Ottoman Empire.

Russian diplomacy had lacked prescience, wired Poincaré to Cambon, but it was now trying to avert the mischief it had unleashed.<sup>2</sup> Indeed Sazonoff and Iswolsky had expressed their desire for Turkey's victory, since her advance could always be controlled. Despite its errors, the Russian Government remained attached to a policy of peace and the status quo, and the support of London and Paris would keep it straight. The British Government should not take its past failings too seriously. "Moreover, like you, I am deeply penetrated with the necessity of maintaining the ties of the Triple Entente, and I do not doubt that the British Government shares our views."

The dangerous fluidity of the situation is indicated in a long letter of Iswolsky to his chief dated October 23.<sup>3</sup> The thought of various eventualities occupied him night and day. The allies might win, Turkey might win, or, if a decision were delayed, massacres of Christians might take place. All three

<sup>1</sup> IV 170-1.

<sup>2</sup> IV, 174-7.

<sup>3</sup> *Iswolsky*, II, 312-5.

alternatives were full of peril. The first was the worst, but the most unlikely. The second, the triumph of Turkey, would be less of a menace to the peace of Europe but would cause the gravest difficulties for Russia, who would be forced by public opinion to rescue the Slav states. She might for instance put pressure on Turkey by mobilising in the Caucasus. "As I see Poincaré almost every day and discuss confidentially with him all kinds of subjects, I thought it possible to raise this matter, explaining that I only spoke for myself. At first he was horrified. He replied that such unilateral action would infringe the unity of the Powers and would drive Austria to follow suit. It would also provoke a strong reaction against Russia in England, and would lead to a split in the Triple Entente." Iswolsky explained that he was only thinking of a decisive victory by the Turks, to which Austria would not object; and Germany would be glad to see Russia's attention diverted from her western frontiers. "My conversation was not in vain, for Poincaré reacted to my idea not only very quietly but with some interest in a type of unavoidable intervention least dangerous to general peace. I hope you will not blame me for taking up such a delicate matter with him. I think it wise to convince him of the inevitability of our active intervention under certain circumstances. If we do not move, we earn the gratitude of France. If we do, he will be prepared and will give valuable help towards localising the issue. If we resolve on mobilisation or on the transfer of our Caucasian troops, he should be informed in good time so that he may help us to smooth the path in London." Though Poincaré was interested in the idea, concluded the letter, he emphasised the necessity, before such measures were decided, of exhausting all means of collective action on Turkey, and expressed his belief in the efficacy of such action if undertaken with the necessary unanimity.

The sensational victories of the allies blew Poincaré's plans of mediation into thin air, and terminated Iswolsky's speculations on Russian activities in the Caucasus. On October 29 Sazonoff wired that circumstances required something more than reforms.<sup>1</sup> He left it to Poincaré to approach the Powers. He had no precise suggestions, though he added that Russia would assent to the most substantial rewards for the Balkan states. Russia, added Louis, could not deny her past: Bulgaria, Servia and Greece must all be satisfied. Servia passionately

<sup>1</sup> *D.D.F.* IV, 286-7.

desired a port on the Adriatic, and Russia would like her to have it if Austria would consent. "That is the chief difficulty", commented the Ambassador. "M. Sazonoff greatly hopes that you will try to solve it and to secure this Austro-Serb agreement which is so important for European peace."

Poincaré agreed that the successes of the allies had transformed the situation, and he submitted the following formula to London and St. Petersburg.<sup>1</sup> "Les Puissances, reconnaissant que l'heure approche où elles pourront exercer leur médiation entre les belligérants de la péninsule balkanique, et continuant de placer au premier rang de leurs préoccupations le maintien de la paix Européenne, déclarent qu'elles s'appliqueront à leur œuvre commune dans un esprit d'absolu désintéressement." The two Entente Powers having accepted, he submitted his formula to Austria, Germany and Rome. If Austria assented, she bound herself: if she declined, she disclosed her ambitions. The formula was promptly rejected at Vienna. If he accepted it, explained Berchtold, he would be disavowed by public opinion. The Powers, he added, would forfeit their influence with the Balkan states by suggesting that they would not defend their respective interests.

Angry though he was at Austria's refusal, the indefatigable Poincaré adjusted himself to the new situation, since her attitude in his opinion rendered mediation even more urgent. The following plan was therefore proposed to London and St. Petersburg.<sup>2</sup>

I. The Powers will jointly urge the belligerents to suspend hostilities.

II. The sovereignty of the Sultan will be maintained intact in Constantinople and its environs.

III. In the other portions of European Turkey the situation shall be modified regionally and in such a way that the interests of all the states concerned are impartially balanced.

IV. In order to settle these questions in a spirit of perfect understanding, the Powers shall meet at once in a conference to which the belligerents and Roumania shall be invited.

Grey approved the consultation of the Powers on the four points; but even if they were accepted, events moved so rapidly that they might soon be out of date. Before a conference met, some idea of Russian and Austrian views should be obtained. Sazonoff also accepted, subject to changing "the environs" of Constantinople to "son rayon", since Adrian-

<sup>1</sup> IV, 291-5, 315-6.

<sup>2</sup> IV, 323, November 1.

ople should remain Turkish. "You know", he explained, "that we are sensitive about Constantinople." Poincaré was prepared to accept "rayon", but thought it detrimental to the moral influence of Russia and the Triple Entente to tell Bulgaria that she could not have Adrianople. After accepting the Serbo-Bulgar pacts Russia would seem to contradict herself and would in any case damage the Triple Entente if she treated Bulgaria too harshly. "Poincaré", wrote Bertie to Grey on November 7, "does not at all like being dragged along by Sazonoff and Iswolsky and relies on you to put the skid on the Russian coach."<sup>1</sup>

It was now Sazonoff's turn to outline a programme, the prompt mediation of the Powers being needed to keep the Bulgarians out of the Turkish capital.<sup>2</sup> His scheme included the Sultan's retention of Constantinople and territory up to the Maritza, the division of the remainder of the peninsula among the allies in accordance with their pacts, a small Albania, access of Servia to the sea, a rectification of the Bulgar-Roumanian frontier, and an independent Mount Athos under the authority of a Patriarch. Poincaré observed to Iswolsky that the inclusion of Adrianople in the Constantinople zone was premature and might needlessly estrange the Bulgarians. On receiving the assurance of Jilinski that Adrianople was not the key to Constantinople, Sazonoff agreed that the Bulgarians might have it though Sofia should not be informed.

While Sazonoff was mainly preoccupied with Bulgarian ambitions on the Bosphorus, Poincaré was increasingly concerned at what he called the enigmatic attitude of Austria. It would be wise, he wrote in a formal letter to Iswolsky on November 4 after consulting the Cabinet, to decide on a common line if she attempted territorial aggrandisement.<sup>3</sup> "You were good enough to inform me that this eventuality was foreseen by the Racconigi agreements, and that Italy, like Russia, declared her opposition to the territorial extension of any Great Power in the Balkans. The French Government also considers that an enterprise of this character would open the door to every sort of complication. I therefore desire to know if the Imperial Government, like ourselves, is definitely hostile to any annexation of Ottoman territory by a Great Power, and if it is prepared to examine with France and England the means to avert the danger." In forwarding the

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. IX, Part 2, 117.*

<sup>2</sup> *D.D.F. IV, 350, 358.*

<sup>3</sup> *Iswolsky, II, 335-7.*

letter to his chief and pressing for a written reply, Iswolsky pointed out that it denoted an entirely new attitude. "Hitherto France has told us that the local, so to speak purely Balkan, events could only give rise to diplomatic steps. Now she seems to realise that territorial conquests by Austria would involve the whole European equilibrium and consequently her own interests. I explained to Poincaré that, by his suggestion to examine with us and England the means of preventing such conquests, he had raised the question of the practical consequences of the proposed agreement."

Sazonoff drafted the following reply, which Iswolsky forwarded to Poincaré.<sup>1</sup> "M. Sazonoff authorises me to say that Russia, like France, will not remain passive in the event of a territorial aggrandisement of Austria-Hungary in the Balkan peninsula. He notes with satisfaction that, in the opinion of the Government of the Republic, France would not be indifferent in such an eventuality. In this sense the Imperial Government is very ready, in agreement with the Paris and London Cabinets, to consider the attitude which might become necessary." In his accompanying letter to Iswolsky the Russian Foreign Minister explained that he had deliberately employed vague phraseology, since in a continually changing situation Russia herself might conceivably wish to annex Turkish territory in the Dardanelles.

When the Turkish stand at the Chatalja lines removed the danger of a Bulgarian advance on Constantinople, the question of a Servian port on the Adriatic became the most explosive issue of the day. On November 12 the Russian Embassy communicated a reassuring note summarising a telegram from Sazonoff to Belgrad.<sup>2</sup> Austria, backed by Germany and Italy, was irrevocably opposed to Servia's access to the Adriatic. France and England publicly declared that they were not disposed to allow a conflict with the Triple Alliance about this matter. The Russian Government categorically declared that Servia must not hope to drag Russia in, for she was resolved not to fight about a Serb port. Further, the partition of European Turkey between the Allies, without regard to the interests of Austria and Italy, would alienate from Servia the sympathies of France and England. An Albanian state was inevitable. The more conciliatory Servia showed herself, the better would it be when the frontiers of Albania came to be fixed. On the same day a further note from the Russian

<sup>1</sup> *Iswolsky*, II, 345-6.

<sup>2</sup> *D.D.F.* IV, 443-5.

Embassy revealed the knowledge that Serbia might take the bit between her teeth. To avoid dangerous complications the French and British Governments should counsel moderation at Belgrad. For Austria, relying on her allies, appeared to have decided on a strong line in reference to Servian access to the sea. Confronted by the solidarity of the Triple Alliance, Russia desired to learn the attitude of France and England if Austrian intervention occurred.

The French Government, wired Poincaré, could not define its attitude till it knew what steps Russia would propose. Taking no notice of this inquiry the Russian Ambassador, acting under instructions, returned to the charge.<sup>1</sup> The French Government, wrote Poincaré to Iswolsky, could not define its course till the Russian Government had explained its own views. Russia was the party chiefly interested in the question, and it was for her to formulate proposals. He proceeded to rectify Sazonoff's statement to Belgrad that France and England openly proclaimed that they were in no way disposed to allow the conflict with the Triple Alliance to be envenomed by the question of a Serb port. He had not heard of any such declaration by England. As for the French Government it had said and done nothing which could imply any lack of support. In reporting the interview to Louis he added: "I am aware that in 1908-9 Iswolsky felt able to attribute the checks to his policy to the hesitations of France. I am anxious that reproaches of this kind shall not be addressed to us."

Iswolsky's report of the conversation put a striking phrase into Poincaré's mouth. "It all comes to this: if Russia goes to war, France will do the same, since we know that in this matter Germany would stand behind Austria."<sup>2</sup> At this stage a remarkable incident occurred. "It seems", writes Poincaré in his *Souvenirs*, "that after sending his telegram to M. Sazonoff he felt remorse for having travestied my declarations."<sup>3</sup> In any case he came to see me on November 18, and, after all sorts of circumlocutions, he read me a passage in which he pretended that I had said that France would wage war if Russia did so. I protested vigorously, and told him that I had never said anything of the kind." The interview was promptly reported to Louis.<sup>4</sup> "I told him that this formula was too general, and that I had simply said that France would respect the treaty of

<sup>1</sup> IV, 480-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Souvenirs*, II, 339.

<sup>3</sup> *Iswolsky*, II, 346-7, November 17.

<sup>4</sup> *D.D.F.* IV, 502.

alliance and would support Russia even by military measures if the *casus foederis* arose. M. Iswolsky promised rectification. I should be obliged if you would define our attitude in strict conformity with the treaty."

A conversation with Tittoni added to Poincaré's anxieties.<sup>1</sup> In a conflict between Austria and Russia concerning Albania, explained the Italian Ambassador, the Visconti-Venosta agreement would force Italy to side with Austria. "But if Germany intervenes," interjected Poincaré, "and we have to support Russia, you will surely not forget our agreement of 1902?" That, replied Tittoni, was subsequent to the Albanian pact and could not destroy it. The agreement of 1902, rejoined Poincaré, was general and admitted no exception. It would be very embarrassing, admitted the Ambassador, and it was necessary at all costs to prevent the question arising. The strain was relieved when Iswolsky subsequently admitted the limited nature of the Albanian arrangement. A fortnight later Poincaré was informed by Russia of the Racconigi pact, and revealed in return the Franco-Italian pact of 1902.

On November 20 Louis reported that, although a Servian port was the chief topic of conversation in St. Petersburg, the Tsar and Sazonoff felt that Russia should reserve her principal effort for Constantinople and the Straits.<sup>2</sup> The time was approaching, remarked the latter, when Russia must decide on her claims, which would be based on their neutralisation. Other questions would have to be decided by the Powers, among them that of the Armenians and the Aegean isles. "At St. Petersburg", concluded Louis, "they are evidently ready to contemplate the settlement not only of these questions but of all those which the dismemberment of the Empire would raise." Poincaré promised energetic support if Russia raised the question of the Straits.

The emergence of so many issues confirmed his conviction of the necessity of a conference, for which Sazonoff was equally anxious. Public opinion, declared the latter, alarmed by rumours of an imminent conflict between the Great Powers, would be reassured. A preliminary exchange of views on the programme should take place, perhaps through the Ambassadors of the Great Powers at Paris in conjunction with the French Minister of Foreign Affairs. Its conclusions would be submitted to the Great Powers. Poincaré replied that it would be difficult for him to take the initiative. If conversa-

<sup>1</sup> IV, 509-10.

<sup>2</sup> IV, 513.



tions were to be held at Paris, Russia or still better England should make the first move. To Paul Cambon he explained that Russia might seem too directly involved. The idea should therefore be suggested by the English Government at Berlin and Vienna. On the other hand, if the Ambassadors at Paris were to limit the rights of the Balkan states, France might lose credit in the Near East. Grey consented to propose a reunion of Ambassadors in Paris, as Poincaré eagerly desired. Knowing that Iswolsky was *persona ingrata* with the Central Powers, the latter informed Grey that the Ambassador had shown extreme moderation in the matter of Servia's access to the Adriatic. When, to Poincaré's annoyance, Germany and Austria objected to Paris, he accepted London, hoping that the peace conference itself would meet in the French capital.

The risk of a general war emphasised the importance of Anglo-French co-operation. When Bethmann formally announced in the Reichstag on December 2 that Germany would stand by Austria if she were attacked, Poincaré instructed Cambon to discover the intentions of the British Government.<sup>1</sup> "If Austria attacked Servia, if Russia were constrained to defend her, if Germany intervened to help Austria against Russia, and if France were led to support Russia, what would the British Government do?" Grey confessed to uneasiness at Bethmann's speech, but refused to answer the hypothetical question. The attitude of the Government would depend on opinion in Parliament and on the manner in which the conflict arose. Poincaré could expect no other reply, and he had as little desire for a conflagration as Grey himself. "I asked the President of the Council this evening", wired Bertie on November 26, "whether he thought the Russian Government would go to war in order to place Servia territorially on the Adriatic."<sup>2</sup> I said that I felt sure that public opinion in England would be against a war for such a purpose, for it would be insensate. Would French public opinion support Russia in such a case? The President of the Council said that public opinion in France would be against such a war and that the Russian Government had counselled moderation at Belgrad."

Yet everybody was aware that France could not dissociate herself from Russia, and that in the last resort she was not mistress of her policy. France, reported Schoen on November

<sup>1</sup> *D.D.F.* IV, 632, 642-3.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T.* IX, Part 2, 206.

10, would almost certainly regard an Austro-Russian conflict as a *casus belli* without inquiring who started it.<sup>1</sup> That was as inevitable, remarked Poincaré academically, as that Germany would support Austria. He added that it would be monstrous for France and Germany to engage in a fearful war for reasons which did not directly concern their vital interests. "This observation expresses his urgent wish that this should not occur. That he really means it is proved not only by his reiterated assurances of devotion to peace but by his course since the beginning of the danger in the Near East. And in the wish to avoid war he is at one with the nation. He accurately described the mood of France in his recent speech at Nantes: *La France ne veut pas la guerre mais elle ne la craint pas.*"

At the end of the first Balkan war Iswolsky wrote one of his longest and most interesting letters to his chief.<sup>2</sup> His daily telegrams had attempted to convey all Poincaré's moods, and had inevitably mirrored the changing influences which played on the French Government. "Yet I can say with full conviction that he holds to his course. Though he does his utmost to secure a peaceful solution of the present crisis, he never forgets for a moment that the day may come when France must afford Russia armed support." Poincaré had recently remarked that French opinion was very pacific and that he must always bear this in mind. "All the more must we be grateful for his firm resolve to fulfil the duties of the alliance in case of need." If the crisis came, the decision would be made by the three powerful personalities at the head of the Cabinet, Poincaré, Millerand and Delcassé. "It is lucky for us that we have to do with these people and not with the opportunists of recent years."

## IX

When the armistice of December 4 brought the first Balkan war to an end, Poincaré renewed his plea for a formal conference in which the Balkan states and Roumania should participate. The suggestion was premature, and Grey replied that a *réunion* of Ambassadors would be extremely useful in preparing the ground. On December 10 a Russian note invited an exchange of views with Paris and London on the programme for the *réunion*.<sup>3</sup> The most important items were Albania and

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIII, 309-12.

<sup>2</sup> *Iswolsky*, II, 374-8, December 5.

<sup>3</sup> *D.D.F.* V, 51-2.

Servia's access to the sea. Russia's essential aim was to assure the political and economic emancipation of Servia. That it might not appear as an Austro-Serb or Austro-Russian conflict, the organisation of Albania should be discussed before its frontiers. Albania should be an autonomous province under the sovereignty of the Sultan, in which Turkey might maintain a limited number of troops. Suggestions for Servian communications with the coast and for the Albanian frontiers followed.

On December 15 Poincaré sent full instructions to Paul Cambon for the coming discussions.<sup>1</sup> Beginning with Albania he accepted the Russian plan of frontiers, with autonomy under the suzerainty of the Sultan and the guarantee of the Powers, which would prevent Austrian control. Constantinople should remain in Turkish possession with a zone along the Marmora and the Dardanelles. Adrianople should fall to Bulgaria, partly to facilitate a Greco-Bulgar agreement about Salonica, partly to show her the favourable dispositions of France. As regards the Straits Russia would not make any demands, but, if the question were raised by others, France would support her ally so far as possible without coming into collision with England. Roumania might be heard by the *réunion*, but could not be a member. Greece might have Crete and the Turkish islands, including those provisionally occupied by Italy. If Bulgaria pressed for Thasos, she might have it; Lemnos and Tenedos, commanding the Dardanelles, might be neutralised under Greek sovereignty; the construction of fortifications might be forbidden. If certain Great Powers wished Chios and Mytilene to be left to Turkey, France would not oppose. Austria could not be allowed to obtain a privileged economic position in the Balkan states. Salonica might become a free port, with transit facilities and tariff agreements for her goods. The main point was to prevent Austria securing a political hegemony in the Balkans which might weaken the influence of Russia and France. "We shall try to maintain the Balkan union and we shall advise the allied states to be conciliatory. If on certain points divergent interests cause disagreements, we shall not take sides but reserve our judgment in order to play the part of the arbiter, when the moment arrives, in concert with our friends and allies." Two days later he learned that the Powers of the Triple Alliance had given their Ambassadors in London identical instructions.

<sup>1</sup> V, 83-7, 92.

Cambon was instructed to inform Grey, and to reach agreement with the Russian Ambassador and the British Government on the points to be discussed.

Neither the armistice nor the prospect of the *réunions* did much to diminish the anxieties of the Powers ; for a clash between Austria and Russia, the rival and the champion of Serbia, seemed increasingly probable. On December 9 Poincaré wired to Louis that the French Minister of War was anxious about Austrian mobilisation, and wished to know if the Russian General Staff had taken precautions ; for Austria's greater readiness might lead Germany to transfer some army corps from east to west.<sup>1</sup> His alarm as to Austria's movements was increased when the Servian Minister read him a telegram from Belgrad. The Servian Government expected a decisive step on the part of Austria within a week, namely a demand that it should renounce the plan of access to the Adriatic. Her armaments suggested that military measures might follow. What advice would the French Government give in such an eventuality ? Poincaré replied that Serbia should declare her willingness to defer to the advice of the Powers. To a similar request at St. Petersburg Sazonoff urged her to entrust her case to the Triple Entente.

Never in the course of his year of office had the French Premier felt so apprehensive. On December 11 Iswolsky found him extremely alarmed by the information pouring in that Austria was about to attack Serbia.<sup>2</sup> Russia, he complained, was making no counter-preparations. That would allow Austria to deal with the Serbs before her mobilisation was ready. Russia would then have to choose between accepting the *fait accompli* or of beginning a war under conditions highly unfavourable both for herself and her ally, since Germany would probably throw all her forces against France. Worst of all the French Military Attaché reported the opinion expressed in the Russian General Staff that Austria's military preparations on the Russian frontier were merely defensive, that an Austrian attack on Servia was extremely improbable, and that even in such an event Russia would not go to war. The Russian Minister of War expressed his conviction that peace would be preserved and proposed to leave for a holiday. "Poincaré and the whole Cabinet are greatly shaken and excited by this news, for people here are convinced of the war-like character of Austria's preparations and fear that Russia may

<sup>1</sup> D.D.F. V, 39-40.

<sup>2</sup> Iswolsky, II, 338-4.

be caught unawares and that the German attack on France would thereby be facilitated." He had done his best to calm Poincaré, wired the Ambassador on December 14, but nervousness was increasing and Russia should explain her preparations and her attitude.

Four days later, on December 18, Iswolsky wrote a private letter to his chief complaining that he had received no reply to his latest telegrams.<sup>1</sup> There had been a remarkable shift of opinion in Paris. Not long ago the French Government and the press suspected Russia of egging on Serbia, and everybody was saying: *La France ne veut pas faire la guerre pour un port Serbe*. To-day people were surprised and alarmed at her indifference to Austria's mobilisation. The Premier and his colleagues were particularly astonished at the assertion that, even in the event of an Austrian attack on Serbia, she would not fight. Such an attack might involve Russia, and thus automatically bring in Germany and France. "The French Government contemplates this possibility with complete calm and is fully resolved to fulfil its duties as an ally. All necessary measures have been taken, mobilisation on the eastern frontier has been tested, the munitions are in readiness. And precisely at this moment France finds that her ally has completely changed her position, despite the fact that in this matter Russia is the most interested party. Two conclusions are drawn—either that she is not troubling herself about the warlike intentions of Austria, or that for some special reasons she does not wish to confer with France. Both assumptions are equally detrimental to us, and despite my efforts it becomes ever more difficult to preserve a friendly atmosphere." Iswolsky endeavoured to explain that Russia's seeming indifference was merely self-control and a determination not to incur the reproach of dragging her people and her ally into war. France, he added, should be grateful for the manner in which the issue had been handled, all the more since only thus could the support of England be hoped for. These arguments produced little result; for, as the Ambassador confessed, no one could understand Russia's repugnance to a discussion with France of the situation created by Austria's mobilisation.

Before this letter was despatched Sazonoff's reply to Iswolsky's telegram of December 14 reached Paris.<sup>2</sup> It was untrue

<sup>1</sup> *Iswolsky*, II, 396-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Iswolsky*, II, 400, December 18.

that Russia had taken no steps to be ready. For instance she had retained 350,000 reservists, allotted a sum for special needs of army and navy, and moved troops nearer the Austrian frontier. The statement reported by the French Military Attaché that Russia would not fight if Austria attacked Serbia could not have been made by any responsible person. It was a reassuring message, and on December 21 the Premier spoke in the Chamber on foreign affairs in his usual firm tones. France, he declared, had worked for peace throughout the Balkan crisis, had sought to maintain the Concert, had kept in close touch with Russia and England, and regarded it as her elementary duty to show her ally "une amitié effective et agissante."

The alarm about an Austrian ultimatum to Belgrad, for which there had been never any serious foundation, blew over. But at this point Poincaré had cause to complain, not of the slackness of Russia, but of her rashness. On December 23 the Russian Ambassador at Constantinople informed Turkey that her claim to keep Adrianople, Scutari and Janina threatened to prevent the conclusion of peace.<sup>1</sup> If, as the result of her resistance to the demand of the Balkan states, the London negotiations were broken off or suspended, the neutrality of Russia could no longer be guaranteed. The Turkish government, added the French Ambassador in reporting the news to his chief, could not possibly abandon Adrianople to Bulgaria in view of public opinion and the unanimous sentiment of the army. Iswolsky explained that the Russian instructions had been misunderstood. His chief had merely pointed out that the resumption of hostilities would provoke complications in Asia Minor and the countries bordering on Russia, which might necessitate energetic measures. The phrase "our neutrality would no longer be assured" meant that it might be assailed by Kurdish or other invasions. Even so, replied Poincaré, the *démarche* was too important to have been taken without the assent of France—a contention which Iswolsky admitted. Louis was instructed to point out the gravity of a step which might raise the question of Asia Minor in circumstances most dangerous to European peace. Poincaré was prepared to propose a fresh mediation by the Powers on the basis of Adrianople for Bulgaria and the Balkans for the Balkan peoples. In reply to his remonstrance Sazonoff admitted that he had uttered a threat to Turkey, but added that he would not

<sup>1</sup> D.D.F. V, 132-4, 143, 152.

pass from words to deeds without consultation. He did not desire to raise the question of Asia Minor.

At the turn of the year a Russian note invited the support of the French and British representatives in London to four essential points—recognition of the right of Montenegro to the possession of Scutari, delimitation of Albania in accordance with the earlier Russian plan, Servian co-operation in the financial organisation and control of the railway to the Adriatic port, the right of Servia to transport munitions in peace and war through the Albanian port and territory.<sup>1</sup> Poincaré minuted, "We will support Russia, but she must support us over Janina." At the same moment the Austrian Ambassador announced that Berchtold's consent to a neutralised Albanian port was conditional on a general agreement about pending questions. Poincaré quite understood, adding that, if an agreement were not reached, Russia and France would also resume their liberty of action in regard to a port. He seized the opportunity informally to express once again his anxiety as to Austria's armaments. If Austria reduced her troops, replied the Ambassador, the Servian Government would be unable to hold back the army. If no reduction were made, retorted Poincaré, Russia might have to retain time-expired troops, which would be very disquieting for Europe. It was already evident that the programme of the conference bristled with difficulties. In view of the possible failure of the belligerents to agree, he suggested to London and St. Petersburg joint action to secure the cession of Adrianople to Bulgaria and a decision in regard to the islands by the Powers.<sup>2</sup> He reminded Cambon that the Ambassadors could decide nothing, and that, however urgent the issue, the French Government must have time to consider any question not covered by precise instructions. He was rightly determined to keep all decisions in his own hands.

Before any of these questions had been settled Poincaré succeeded Fallières as President of the Republic on January 17, 1913. By common consent his Ministry had been a success. He had done precisely what his countrymen expected and desired. The prestige and self-confidence of France stood far higher than when he had been called to the helm. New life had been put into the army by Millerand, whose energy made a deep impression on the German Military Attaché.<sup>3</sup> The settlement with Spain had removed the last obstacle to the domina-

<sup>1</sup> V, 161, 165-6.

<sup>2</sup> V, 193.

<sup>3</sup> G.P. XXXI, ch. 246.

tion of Morocco. The Mediterranean agreement proclaimed to the world that relations with England were closer than ever. The Naval Convention with Russia had filled a gap in the structure of the alliance, in which he had repeatedly shown his determination that France should not accept a subordinate place. No European statesman had worked with such vigour and resource to avert the outbreak of war in the Balkans or to localise hostilities by keeping the Powers in touch. He spoke with authority, for he felt that the whole country was behind him. "Do not worry", he observed to the Austrian Ambassador in discussing his probable election to the Presidency.<sup>1</sup> "I will see that my successor continues my policy. Ce sera comme si j'étais toujours encore au Quai d'Orsay." How far this ambition was realised does not concern us in this chapter, which deals exclusively with the year in which he was in supreme control of the state. It is enough to say that during the remaining eighteen months of peace French policy continued on the lines which it had followed throughout 1912, namely the development of the Triple Entente and the strengthening of the national defences.

Poincaré's stature was recognised in every quarter. He was never beloved, but the semi-official *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* rightly saluted him as *l'homme de confiance* of the French people.<sup>2</sup> "From the beginning of his Ministry he has been the living expression of a great patriotic activity in the internal and external policy of his country. In the Eastern crisis he has put his talents at the service of European peace." In none of the extracts from the German press sent home by Jules Cambon is there a hint that he was regarded beyond the Rhine as a warmonger or an enemy. The despatches of the Austrian Ambassador depict a statesman Russophil indeed, but far more moderate than Iswolsky.<sup>3</sup> There is not a word in the five massive volumes of the *Documents diplomatiques Français* covering his year at the Quai d'Orsay to suggest that he desired or worked for war. Not till the publication of selections from Iswolsky's despatches in *Un Livre Noir* in 1922 did the notion arise that in the closing months of 1912 he was recklessly playing with fire by giving Russia a free hand and indeed egging her on.

Poincaré's reply is that the Russian Ambassador, whom he distrusted and disliked, is a thoroughly unreliable witness.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. V, 493-4.

<sup>2</sup> D.D.F. V, 294-6.

<sup>3</sup> A. IV, 745-6, 814-6, etc.

<sup>4</sup> *Souvenirs*, I, ch. 10, and *Les Responsabilités de la Guerre*, 47-67.



"In this jumble of documents published by the Bolsheviks", he writes in his *Souvenirs*, "one can discover a few passages which, carefully separated from the context, are capable of different interpretations. But, as M. Herriot said in the Chamber of Deputies on July 6, 1922, if one studies the *Livre Noir* page by page, one finds nothing to compromise the Government of the Republic. . . . I knew that personal preoccupations played a capital part in his policy. Il ne se gênait pas pour substituer ses idées à celles de son gouvernement. Il traduisait à sa manière les instructions qu'il recevait et les réponses qui lui étaient faites au Quai d'Orsay . . . Suivant une méthode chère à quelques représentants étrangers, il prêtait volontiers à ses interlocuteurs, dans sa correspondance officielle, le langage qu'il avait intérêt à leur faire tenir ou les conceptions qu'il voulait suggérer à son Gouvernement, sans en prendre lui-même la responsabilité."

Could Iswolsky have rebutted these grave accusations had he lived to read them? Probably not, though he would certainly have denied them. Not all diplomatists are equally accurate or conscientious reporters of conversations in which the turn of a phrase, the omission of a qualification, or the suppression of a point may make all the difference. Whatever may be thought of Poincaré's policy in 1912 or afterwards, his character stands higher than that of the Russian Ambassador. "I declare on my honour", he wrote shortly before his death, "that I never said a word to him which allowed him to expect from me an extension of the Franco-Russian alliance."<sup>1</sup> Iswolsky's correspondence is an insufficient foundation for the graver charges levelled against him by critics at home and abroad. We approach nearest to the truth if we conclude that, like the ardent patriot he was, he put new vigour into French policy, and that, like a good lawyer, he operated the Russian alliance without straying beyond the letter of its obligations.

Yet the Russian Ambassador was correct in sensing an atmospheric change. Poincaré's accession to office, writes the most impartial and authoritative of French historians, opened a new phase, in which the French Government felt the need to revive the intimacy of the alliance.<sup>2</sup> The experience of the Agadir crisis had shown what a bitter memory Russian statesmen retained of the attitude of France in the Bosnian crisis. If

<sup>1</sup> *Les Responsabilités de la Guerre*, 51.

<sup>2</sup> Renouvin, *Les Engagements de l'Alliance Franco-Russe*, in *Revue d'histoire de la Guerre Mondiale*, October 1934.

fresh Franco-German difficulties arose, was it not essential to count on stronger Russian support? And if reciprocity was to be assured, was it not necessary to manifest a greater interest in Russia's Balkan policy? That was the probable explanation of the new tendencies revealed in the application of the alliance in November 1912, when Poincaré, in view of a possible Austro-Russian conflict about a Serb port, adopted a more decided attitude. Of course he was very careful to say that the military support of France was limited to the *casus foederis*, that is to the hypothesis that Germany intervened to support Austria against Russia. But, unlike Pichon, he admitted the eventuality of a general war about Balkan questions.

In a word, under the stress of events, a broader interpretation of the partnership was advanced. The probability of a general conflict grew with the Agadir crisis and increased still further with the Balkan struggle. The Grey-Cambon letters offered no such support as the logical French mind, which craves for precision, hungered to receive. Russia alone could be counted on in case of need, just as Germany and Austria formed an indivisible *bloc*. Bethmann's historic speech in the Reichstag on December 2, 1912, breathed the same message of unflinching solidarity as Poincaré's conversations with Iswolsky. Neither statesman had the slightest desire for a major conflagration, the result of which was unpredictable. Yet both were ready to fight for the Balance of Power, that master principle which inspired treaties, cemented ententes, and guided the Chancelleries of Europe on their perilous course.



BETHMANN HOLLWEG



CHAPTER III  
BETHMANN HOLLWEG

I

WHEN Bethmann Hollweg succeeded Bülow in July 1909, he brought a fresh mind to the study of foreign affairs.<sup>1</sup> The disillusioned Kaiser was less anxious for another trained diplomatist than for a trustworthy official with whom he could work. He had known the new Chancellor since youth, and, like every one else, held his character in high esteem, though he found him a little too much of the schoolmaster. As Home Secretary he had displayed considerable Parliamentary gifts. Though not a *charmeur*, he was a highly cultivated man, reading Plato in the original and playing Beethoven's sonatas as a relaxation before retiring to rest. Without enemies public or private, he appeared to enter on his duties under the happiest auspices.

In explaining the European situation to his successor Bülow declared that, while Germany's relations with France and Russia were correct, the attitude of England caused grave anxiety.<sup>2</sup> There was no need to be an expert to realise the truth of the statement. When Lloyd George visited Berlin in 1908 Bethmann bitterly complained of the iron ring that was being drawn round Germany.<sup>3</sup> He had taken part in the important meeting of June 3, 1909, at which Bülow, Tirpitz, Moltke, Schoen and Metternich had expounded their views on the possibility of an agreement with England.<sup>4</sup> The only black cloud, declared Bülow on that occasion, lay over the North Sea, but it was a thundercloud. Bethmann thought a

<sup>1</sup> Bethmann's policy must be studied in *G.P.*, vols. 27-39, in his *Betrachtungen zum Weltkrieg*, and in his *Kriegsreden*, herausgegeben von Friedrich Thimme. Dr. Thimme is at work on his papers. Kötschke, *Unser Reichskanzler*, supplies information on his early life. The most intimate studies are to be found in Theodor Wolff, *Through Two Decades*, and Otto Hammann, *Bilder aus der letzten Kaiserzeit*. Jäckh, *Kiderlen-Wächter*; Jagow, *Ursachen und Ausbruch des Weltkrieges*; Schoen, *Memoirs of an Ambassador*; Tirpitz, *Politische Dokumente*; Moltke, *Erinnerungen, Briefe, Dokumente*; Wilhelm II, *Ereignisse und Gestalten*; Bülow, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, vol. 3; *Beyens, Deux Années à Berlin*, 1912-4, are useful.

<sup>2</sup> *Betrachtungen*, I, ch. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, I, 28.

<sup>4</sup> *G.P.* XXVIII, 168-75.

German initiative undesirable unless they could make a definite proposal, which was not yet the case. Perhaps a certain *détente* could be secured in the colonial and commercial field. For the latter, however, the presupposition of England's conversion to tariffs was lacking. But was not a slowing down of ship-building or modification of the Navy Law a possibility? The English were thoroughly alarmed. What could the German Navy offer if a friendly suggestion arrived? That would depend on the suggestion, replied Tirpitz. Was it not possible to build three ships instead of four in the following year, pursued the Home Secretary, if the English confined themselves to four? Tirpitz agreed; but when the Chancellor asked him to prepare a formula for an understanding, the Admiral undertook the task only as a preparation for a hypothetical approach. The conference revealed Bülow's tardy conversion to the views of Metternich and the opposition of Tirpitz to serious concessions. Its echoes were in Bethmann's ears when in the following month he became responsible for the policy of the Empire.

In the opening pages of his apologia he describes the situation which he found.<sup>1</sup> England, France and Russia had formed a coalition, with which Japan was associated through her English alliance. Italy had drawn ever nearer to the same group. The hostility of each member to Germany was the cement. The antagonism of the Franco-Russian alliance had been intensified by the Morocco and the Bosnian crises. The memory of Shimonoseki rankled at Tokio. To England's economic rivalry had been added the issue of the fleet. Since it was impossible to dissolve the Franco-Russian partnership, Germany's task was to diminish its danger by an understanding with England. The Kaiser, he adds, was in full sympathy with this plan.

After studying a series of Memoranda, drawn up by Schoen, the Foreign Minister, officials of the Foreign Office and Ballin,<sup>2</sup> the new Chancellor invited Tirpitz to an interview on August 11.<sup>3</sup> Bethmann, records the latter, was delighted and relieved at his proposals for conditional reduction. Germany might build three capital ships in 1910 and two in 1911 if England limited herself to four in 1910 and three in 1911. On the following day the two men visited the Kaiser at Wilhelmshöhe. The chances of an agreement, argued the Chancellor, were

<sup>1</sup> *Betrachtungen*, I, 3-12.

<sup>2</sup> *G.P.* XXVIII, ch. 223.

<sup>3</sup> Tirpitz, *Dokumente*, I, 164-5.

good, and Germany should make an offer. Bülow had desired a comprehensive agreement, covering not only the fleet but colonial questions, the Baghdad railway, and above all a neutrality pact. Whether this should be aimed at could not be decided at present. It would be essential at the outset to explain that a friendly orientation of English policy was indispensable, and England would have to declare that her treaties and ententes had no point against Germany. The plan of a naval agreement and the Chancellor's analysis of the situation were supported by Tirpitz at this early stage. The Kaiser not only approved the Tirpitz formula and the Chancellor's arguments, but pressed for the opening of official negotiations.

Fortified by this support Bethmann invited the British Ambassador to the Wilhelmstrasse on August 21.<sup>1</sup> Realising that the naval question was regarded as the chief obstacle to real cordiality, the German Government, he declared, was ready to make proposals for a naval agreement. Such a discussion, however, would be fruitless unless it formed part of a scheme for a good general understanding and was based on the conviction that neither country had aggressive designs against the other. In view of the existing friendship and alliances, interjected Goschen, a formal entente would be difficult to arrange. With good will, replied the Chancellor, a satisfactory formula could be found. The understanding which would render a naval arrangement possible must provide a sense of security on both sides. Germany could not slacken her shipbuilding unless she was sure that she would not be penalised. He would illustrate his conception of hostility by a concrete case. If Russia made an unprovoked attack on Austria, Germany must help her ally. If England joined Russia, that would indicate hostile feeling. If, however, Germany made an unprovoked attack on France, and England came to her rescue, he would regard that as quite justifiable. The Tirpitz formula was not mentioned, as Bethmann first desired assent to negotiations.

Grey telegraphed that the Chancellor's ideas would be examined in the most friendly spirit, and a week later sent an official reply. The Chancellor's message had made a most favourable impression. Proposals for a naval agreement would be cordially welcomed, and any suggestion for a political understanding consistent with the maintenance of England's friendships

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. VI*, ch. 45 ; *Betrachtungen*, I. ch. 3.



would be received with the greatest sympathy. Bethmann expressed gratitude for the message, but, as Tirpitz and Schoen would be away, he could not make definite proposals before October. Meanwhile he consulted Kiderlen, whom he desired to succeed Schoen as Foreign Minister, and who, as an opponent of Tirpitz, strongly approved the plan of a rapprochement. The prospect seemed encouraging and his heart was in the scheme.

On October 14 the Chancellor filled in the outlines. He had no desire to interfere with existing friendships or alliances. England, interjected Goschen, had no formal understanding with France or Russia, and was therefore unlikely to go further with Germany than she had gone with them. An exchange of pacific assurances, he believed, would be forthcoming. Would that meet the German view? A formal assurance, replied Bethmann, that the agreements between England, France and Russia were not directed against Germany would facilitate a naval deal. Goschen asked what naval proposals he had in mind: he assumed they would not be based on the existing programme. The Navy Law, was the reply, could only be changed by the Reichstag. How then, inquired the Ambassador, could expenditure be reduced? The *tempo* might perhaps be relaxed, answered the Chancellor. A naval arrangement bristled with difficulties, and therefore it was all the more necessary that an exchange of pacific assurances should precede or accompany the negotiation. In proposing an arrangement Germany was making a great sacrifice, and the Government must therefore receive assurances to justify it to the Reichstag and the nation. Since the Chancellor seemed to expect England to make proposals, Goschen reminded him of his statement in August that it was now Germany's turn.

The conversation, though friendly in tone, was disappointing to both sides. There was evidently as little chance of England promising neutrality as of Germany reducing her programme. In a private letter to Metternich Bethmann explained that he had been purposely vague, as he wished to discover whether English opinion favoured a deal. The naval and political agreements must be discussed at the same time. He did not anticipate a preventive war against Germany. The danger was that an "incident" should lead the English chauvinists to explode. This peril could be removed, not by any formula, but only by a very gradual change in public opinion. In view of what had happened with France and

Russia it was not impossible. A promise of neutrality was the ideal, but even a limited agreement would usefully supplement a naval pact. In conversation with Metternich Grey stressed the difficulty of drafting a political formula and suggested an exchange of naval information.

A third interview took place on November 4, when the Chancellor attempted to meet the demand for some reduction. Both countries should agree, say for three or four years, not to exceed a stated number of ships. The Ambassador inquired whether an exchange of information was contemplated. He had no objection in principle, replied Bethmann, but the experts must decide. Passing to the question of political assurances, he proposed a declaration that neither entertained any idea of aggression, and that, in the event of an attack on either by a third Power or group of Powers, the other should stand aside. Goschen rejoined that England had no such arrangement with France or Russia. Nor had she a naval agreement with them, retorted the Chancellor. They could not reduce their programme at England's wish if they were liable to be opposed by her. The programme, interjected the Ambassador, would not be reduced, but merely retarded. Reduction of the programme established by law, replied Bethmann, was impossible, at any rate for the present. Yet retardation was a great concession, and perhaps further reductions might become possible in future years. Goschen expressed regret that the entire German programme was to be carried out, and the Ambassador's disappointment was shared in Downing Street, where the suggestion of a small temporary retardation evoked no gratitude. The Chancellor instructed Metternich to point out that no country could promise never to exceed a certain number of ships. The Navy Law ran till 1917, when the world situation might have utterly changed. The English must surely see that only a short term agreement was possible. At this stage the British Government called a halt owing to the General Election. Though Bethmann's desire for a *détente* was undiminished, he had discovered that the problem was much more complicated than he thought. Neither party was prepared to make the large concessions which were asked. The more the question was discussed, the further the goal appeared to recede.

When the British elections of January, 1910, were over there was no automatic resumption of talk, and Goschen confided to Grey that he was somewhat depressed. "The Chancellor is

all right and very friendly and cordial, and so is Schoen; Stemrich is also well disposed; but I feel that amongst the Heads of Bureaux there is antagonism towards us." Bethmann was equally discouraged by the strong expressions of distrust during the election. "I think we must wait and see whether the new Government approaches us again in regard to the naval question", he wrote to Metternich on February 1. The experienced Ambassador agreed that, after the recent anti-German manifestations, it was best to wait. He had only one suggestion to offer. After two alterations of the Navy Law, one increasing the size of ships, the other reducing their lives, few Englishmen believed in its finality. A promise of no further change during the term of any agreement might be considered. As Grey made no move, Metternich informed him on March 22 that the German attitude was unchanged. The whole question, declared Grey, turned on whether the Germans were willing to alter the Navy Law. That had never been suggested, replied the Ambassador. "Then it will be difficult to reduce our expenditure", replied the Foreign Minister. A few days later he told Kühlmann, the *Chargé d'Affaires*, that he had been reflecting on the complaint of non-renewal of the negotiations. A reduction in naval expenditure had been pronounced impossible, and therefore a general arrangement was at present beyond reach. Exchange of information, however, and occasional inspection of shipyards might be considered. A settlement of the Baghdad railway question, combined with a friendly discussion about Persia, would also be extremely helpful in restoring friendly relations.

On April 10 the Chancellor sent for the British Ambassador.<sup>1</sup> His tone was as friendly as ever. The desire for good relations with England had been the mainspring of his policy, not merely from inclination but because he realised its supreme importance. The main point was to create an atmosphere of good feeling by a process of give and take. If his naval proposals were unacceptable to England, the suggestion that Germany should hand over the southern section of the Baghdad railway would be equally unacceptable to the German people, for the line was regarded as a great national undertaking. What would they say if the most valuable section was handed over without any return to the Power which had been the bitterest opponent of the scheme? Their anger would be directed against England as well as against their own Govern-

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* VI, 451-65, and *G.P.* XXVII, 636-8.

ment, and relations would be far worse than before. When Goschen pointed out that England's consent to an increase of the Turkish customs would enable Turkey to finance other sections of the line, Bethmann replied that it would be a concession to Turkey, not to Germany. The railway would in any case be built, and a year or two earlier or later was a trifle. He had to be particularly careful, for he had been constantly attacked for his alleged want of backbone. What compensation had he in mind? inquired the Ambassador. The only way of rendering an agreement on the Baghdad railway palatable to the German people, was the reply, would be a general political understanding. An agreement on Persia should also form part of the deal. The Chancellor's latest declarations seemed to Grey to provide no basis for further discussion of any of the four points at issue—a political agreement, naval limitation, the Baghdad railway and Persia.

A reference to the recent negotiations in Asquith's speech of July 14 on the naval estimates was responsible for the resumption of talk. Since Bethmann complained that the German attitude had been misrepresented, a British Memorandum dated July 29 was drawn up in reply.<sup>1</sup> After summarising the negotiations and their failure, Grey launched a fresh suggestion. An agreement might be made, based on an understanding that the German Naval Programme should not be increased, and accompanied by an exchange of information between the Admiralties. Such a transaction would have a considerable moral effect, and might be followed by a state of good feeling which would facilitate the arrangement of minor matters and perhaps eventually lead to a reduction of naval expenditure. After taking ample time for consideration Bethmann handed Goschen his reply on October 12.<sup>2</sup> He had no objection to the exchange of information, but, if this involved the surrender of the right to expand the Navy Bill, he must know what England would offer in return. He was still ready to slow down within the limits of the Navy Law; but as any arrangement must affect defensive power, good relations were an indispensable preliminary. He still believed that a political formula could be found.

Bethmann's tone, reported Goschen, was much friendlier than the criticisms of British policy which he read from his brief. "I think that the Chancellor is all right, that he really is desirous of establishing better relations between the two coun-

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* VI, 501-2.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, VI, 520-30.

tries ; but I think that Kiderlen is doing and will continue to do all he can to prevent him from being too conciliatory." Kiderlen's zeal for an Anglo-German rapprochement had cooled since his appointment as Foreign Minister in June 1910, and the Chancellor had now to struggle, not only with the Kaiser and Tirpitz, but with the Wilhelmstrasse as well. The long conversation and Memorandum of October 12 made it clearer than ever that no agreement, political, naval or regional, was in sight. Indeed the problem was now complicated by German charges of unfriendliness in recent years, and for a time the discussion was diverted to unprofitable recriminations. The exchange of information, to which Grey attached far more importance than Bethmann, was further discussed in the early months of 1911, but no agreement was within reach when the Agadir crisis arose.<sup>1</sup> Any faint chance of success was destroyed by the withdrawal of the German offer of a reduction of *tempo*. Bethmann had done his best to untie the knot, and he had failed.

## II

When the hopes of dispersing the thundercloud over the North Sea had been frustrated, a gleam of light appeared in the eastern sky. The withdrawal of Iswolsky to Paris in the autumn of 1910 facilitated a rapprochement with Berlin. Sazonoff's earliest official duty was to take part in his master's visit to the German Court, which formed the starting-point of important negotiations.<sup>2</sup> Bethmann's first impressions were highly favourable, as he reported to the Kaiser after meeting him at the Russian Embassy on November 1. It would be possible, he believed, to restore the contact with Russian policy which had been lost under Iswolsky.

The Tsar's visit to Potsdam on November 4 gave satisfaction to both parties. The rulers were in good spirits, and Sazonoff won the confidence and respect of his hosts. The relations of Russia and Austria, he declared, were correct : friendly they could not at present become. If difficulties arose, St. Petersburg would endeavour to talk to Vienna through Berlin. Germany, he was assured, would always be ready to mediate. As regards the Balkans, Russia's historical mission had been to liberate the Christian peoples. He would con-

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.*, VI, 631-6. F.O. Mem. on Anglo-German negotiations, 1909-11.

<sup>2</sup> *G.P.* XXVII, chs. 218 and 219 ; *G. and T.* X, Part I, ch. 89.

tinue the tradition, but he aimed merely at the maintenance of peace and the *status quo*, and he would do his utmost to localise a conflagration. Austria, replied Bethmann, had given Germany definite assurances that she had no expansionist plans in the Balkans. If she formed such plans in the future, Germany was not pledged and did not desire to support them. Sazonoff expressed his warmest gratitude for this declaration, and remarked that it was of the utmost importance for Russian policy. Passing to Turkey, he agreed that her loss of strength would endanger peace in the Balkans. Germany, was the reply, desired to support Turkey, but only so far as it was necessary for her internal consolidation. Sazonoff's suggestion that the opposition of the Persian Government to Russia's economic efforts was due to Berlin was dismissed as a fable. If Germany sought no concessions in the Russian zone, Russia would not oppose the continuance of the railway to Baghdad. Her first line would be from Teheran to Khanikin, north of which Germany would not establish connections. If England joined in the Gulf section, Russia would expect some compensation. Nothing was put on paper, and the discussions were transferred to St. Petersburg.

It was a promising start. While Bethmann and Kiderlen were most interested in the withdrawal of Russian opposition to the Baghdad railway, Sazonoff regarded with peculiar satisfaction the assurance that Austria had no expansionist plans and that Germany would not support her if she had. When he suggested an exchange of notes, Bethmann forwarded a draft as a basis of discussion.

I. The German Government, having received from the Austrian Government the most explicit assurances that it had no intention of following an expansionist policy in the Near East, declared that it had not undertaken and would not undertake to support such a policy if pursued by Austria.

II. The Russian Government declared that it was not pledged to and had no intention of supporting a policy hostile to Germany which England might pursue.

III. The two Governments were agreed in desiring to maintain the *status quo* in the Balkans. If a conflict arose, they would do their best to localise it.

IV. The tranquillity of the Balkans required the pacific development of the Balkan states liberated by Russia and the support by the Powers of a Government in Turkey strong enough to guarantee order in the interior and on the frontiers.

Neither Government would favour an aggressive policy on the part of Turkey or the Balkan states.

V. In view of their common interest in the integrity and internal tranquillity of Persia, the Governments undertook not to favour any plans of conquest, particularly on the part of Turkey.

VI. In view of Russia's special interest in the Persian frontier, the German Government had no intention of seeking concessions for railways, roads or telegraphs in the north of Persia.

VII. The Russian Government undertook not to hinder German commerce in Persia, subject to the above exceptions.

VIII. The Russian Government would not oppose the Baghdad railway nor a branch to Khanikin, and would build a line from Teheran to Khanikin before any other line in Persia.

IX. The two Governments would facilitate international traffic on future lines connecting Turkey and Persia.

The draft treaty, which Bethmann believed to embody the results of the Potsdam conversations, was accompanied by his proposed announcement to the Reichstag. Neither Government would take part in a combination with an aggressive point against the other. Germany and Russia possessed a similar interest in the maintenance of the status quo in the Balkans and the Near East, and would therefore support no policy directed against it. Germany had willingly recognised Russia's special interest in North Persia, and in consequence her claims to all concessions for railways, roads and telegraphs in that region. Russia in turn would put no obstacles in the way of German trade, and would facilitate its entry into Persia via Baghdad and Khanikin. "We believe that this exchange of views and agreement with Russia, in which other detailed questions were amicably discussed, will make it easy for the two Governments to agree on all new questions as they arise, without changing their general orientation. The Potsdam conversations, in fact, have removed a few misunderstandings, and have confirmed and strengthened the old trustful relations." Sazonoff approved the draft, which was embodied in the Chacellor's speech of December 10.

In a private letter to Aehrenthal describing the Potsdam visit Bethmann spoke in the highest terms of his visitor. Sazonoff, he reported, was a prey to two anxieties—an Austrian expansionist policy in the Balkans supported by Germany, and German encouragement to Turkey to pursue an

aggressive policy in the Balkans and particularly against Persia. These alarms were easily removed and relations of confidence were established at the outset. The assurance that Austria had no expansionist intentions in the Balkans, and that Germany was not pledged to support any such plans, came as such a relief to him that he spontaneously declared that Russia would never join England in any anti-German combinations. The chief value of the conversations was that confidential discussion with St. Petersburg was now possible. This would react on Austro-Russian relations, which Sazonoff repeatedly described as correct. "I believe we may anticipate a real relief to the policy of our two countries as a result of this interview."

Bethmann was to be disappointed once again. England had failed him, and Russia partially eluded his grasp. Sazonoff had at first seen no difficulty in making a declaration about Russian policy towards Germany, though he had naturally said that he must consult the Tsar. Second thoughts were less favourable. It would be difficult, he told Pourtalès, to find a suitable formula. The general declaration asked from Russia seemed to the Tsar much more far-reaching than the assurance that Germany would not support an Austrian expansionist policy in the Balkans. In a private letter to Pourtalès Kiderlen proposed to meet the difficulty rather by widening the German than by diminishing the Russian assurance. "The Russian assurance in regard to England is for me the Alpha and Omega of the whole agreement. It must be so arranged that the Russians are compromised when it reaches English ears." The letter, which Kiderlen wished to be burned, goes far to justify Russian hesitations, though it is safe to say that Bethmann had no such sinister idea in his head.

On December 12 Pourtalès reported Sazonoff's decision. He was willing to repeat his verbal assurances ten or a hundred times, but a written declaration was unnecessary. The deeper reason for refusing a written declaration, as he confessed, was that England might resent it. The Tsar added that the pacific declarations of the two rulers at Potsdam were worth more than an exchange of notes, which might arouse suspicion that Germany wished to estrange Russia from England. Bethmann expressed his gratitude to the Tsar, but he was incensed by Sazonoff's attempt to minimise the importance of the German assurances. In Berlin the Russian statesman had been deeply suspicious of Austrian plans and had expressed his warm



gratitude for Bethmann's declarations : now he pretended to have no fears. In his apologia the Chancellor attributes the failure to secure a formula to the frowns of England and France.

When the promising plan of an exchange of notes was abandoned, attention was focussed on the Baghdad railway.<sup>1</sup> In 1907 Germany had proposed a connection with Teheran via Khanikin, but Russia had sent no reply.<sup>2</sup> The answer came at last, after the Potsdam meeting, in the shape of a Russian draft agreement dated November 25, 1910.<sup>3</sup> Russia pledged herself not to oppose the railway, and undertook to build a line connecting it with the future Persian system. Germany promised neither to construct nor to encourage other connecting lines north of Khanikin ; declared herself to have no political interests in Persia and to pursue purely commercial aims ; and renounced concessions in the Russian zone for railways, roads, navigation and telegraphs.

The draft failed to satisfy Berlin. Germany was invited to make concessions which she had refused in 1907 and which had not been mentioned at Potsdam, above all the renunciation of political interests in Persia. "A contractual declaration that it has no political interests in a country of the size and importance of Persia," commented the Chancellor, "cannot be given by a Great Power without loss of prestige. Moreover such a declaration is extremely elastic and therefore liable to lead to misunderstandings. . . . I must point out that we are making considerably more concessions to Russia in regard to Persia than she to us. We renounce a series of possible concessions, from which Russia, owing to our most favoured nation clause with Persia, cannot exclude us. We receive a rather vague promise of a junction with Khanikin. The undertaking not to oppose the construction of the Baghdad railway has no very great importance for us, since we possess the legal right under our treaty with Turkey." At Kiderlen's suggestion he asked that the Teheran-Khanikin line should be built *pari passu* with the Baghdad-Khanikin branch. If Russia was unable, for financial or other reasons, to build it, Germany would be ready to do so and, if necessary, to give Russia the right of pre-emption. If Sazonoff confined himself to vague assurances, Germany would prefer to resume her full liberty of action.

Pourtalès reported that Sazonoff might possibly yield on certain points. At the end of January 1911, the Russian

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXVII, ch. 219.    <sup>2</sup> G.P. XXV, ch. 185.    <sup>3</sup> G.P. XXVII, 914-5

statesman was warned that, if the negotiations broke down, Germany might make herself disagreeable in Persia. The hint took effect, for the revised Russian draft forwarded to Berlin on February 24 met the two chief complaints.<sup>1</sup> Germany's renunciation of political interests in Persia disappeared, and Russia undertook to build the Teheran-Khanikin line when the Baghdad-Khanikin branch was completed. After taking two months for consideration, Bethmann replied on April 29 that the new draft was an improvement but that the proposed bargain was still unfair to Germany. He asked for an assurance that the Teheran-Khanikin line should be completed at latest within two years after that of the Baghdad-Khanikin branch. He also proposed that the preamble should engage the signatories to respect the integrity and independence of Persia. The latter amendment was criticised by Neratoff, the acting Foreign Minister during the long illness of his chief, on the ground that it raised a new question of principle and changed the whole character of the agreement. In forwarding the German draft Bethmann had told Pourtalès confidentially that, owing to general political considerations, the breakdown of the negotiations was very undesirable. Yet he insisted on a declaration in the preamble. To withdraw this harmless addition in deference to Russian objections would suggest that Germany had handed over Persia to Russia for some paltry commercial advantages. This suspicion must be avoided for the sake of German prestige in the Mohammedan world.

In July the Russians produced their third draft.<sup>2</sup> Neratoff stubbornly refused the addition to the preamble, arguing that it was not a political agreement like the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, and that Persia would dislike the mention of her independence. On the other hand a slight advance was made in the promise to start the Teheran-Khanikin line within two years of the completion of the Baghdad-Khanikin branch, and to complete it within four years. In view of the Agadir crisis the German Government withdrew its demand for the mention of the integrity of Persia, and accepted the time limit of four years for the Teheran-Khanikin branch. A few trifling German suggestions were adopted, and the Treaty was signed on August 19, 1911, by Pourtalès and Neratoff. The latter expressed his hope that this would only be the first step, and that they would proceed to further "arrangements". The Kaiser minuted, "I hope so".

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXVII, 936-40.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 950-5.

Though the Baghdad-Khanikin and Teheran-Khanikin lines were not built, the Potsdam visit and the ensuing discussions rendered Russo-German relations more friendly than at any time since the Björko pact. The declarations on general policy from which so much was hoped had proved impracticable, yet each side could boast of solid gains. To Germany it was a genuine satisfaction that Russia accepted the Baghdad railway, to Russia that her claims in her Persian zone were recognised. The *détente* lasted till the outbreak of the Balkan war. At the moment it appeared a triumph for German diplomacy, all the more since the rapprochement aroused suspicions in Paris and London.

### III

In his first year of office Bethmann tried his hand with England, in the second with Russia, in the third with France. The last of the three attempts was the least successful. The negotiations with England left relations essentially unchanged, with Russia improved, with France emphatically worse. The ultimate responsibility for the failure rested constitutionally with the Chancellor, but Kiderlen is the Man of Agadir. After a year in the Wilhelmstrasse the Foreign Secretary felt himself strong enough to go his own way. Never before had the lack of co-ordination in the grave decisions of foreign policy been more strikingly revealed. Neither the Kaiser nor the Chancellor in his heart approved the technique of their boisterous subordinate, but they lacked the courage and self-confidence requisite to hold him in check. Their difficulties were increased by the fact that he had negotiated the Moroccan pact of February 1909, and that his handling of the second Moroccan crisis in its early phases was beyond reproach. When the *Panther's* spring suddenly brought Europe within sight of war, his dismissal would have been regarded as a national humiliation. All that Bethmann and his master could do was to work for peace behind the scenes. The situation was particularly embarrassing for the Chancellor, who had summoned Kiderlen to Berlin despite the Kaiser's warnings.

The Franco-German pact of 1909, recognising the political preponderance of France in Morocco and the economic *condominium* of the two Powers, was followed by a welcome *détente*; but the arrangement broke down owing to the lack of compromise among business firms. Moreover, while Euro-

pean officers functioned at the ports, the Sultan failed to keep order in the interior. His sovereignty, which formed the juridical basis of the Act of Algeciras, was a sham. At any moment the system created by the stop-gap treaties of 1906 and 1909 might strain and break. On April 19, 1911, Cruppi, the French Foreign Minister, invited the German Ambassador for a frank talk.<sup>1</sup> Communications with Fez were interrupted, and the revolt was spreading. The Sultan had addressed an urgent appeal to France to help him with the organisation of his troops, and she could not refuse. Moreover she would have to consider a demonstration against the rebels and prepare to rescue the Europeans in Fez in case of need. In view of the pact of 1909 the Minister hoped that Germany would not make trouble. On the same day Jules Cambon made a similar communication to the Chancellor, who replied that the despatch of French troops to Fez would cause fresh excitement in Germany and that they might prove difficult to withdraw. No report of danger to Europeans in Fez had reached Berlin. It might arise from foreign military operations, and in that case there might be a "holy war". He could not encourage the despatch of French soldiers. In case of absolute necessity he would not say No, but he greatly hoped the necessity would not arise. The Kaiser was less disturbed. "It will suit us quite well", he telegraphed from Corfu, "if the French get tied up in Morocco with troops and money, and I think it is not in our interest to prevent it. If they break the Algeciras Act, we can at first leave it to the other Powers, above all Spain, to protest." If the public demanded the despatch of warships, the Chancellor was to damp down the cry.

At the end of April the French Ambassador told Kiderlen that bad news had arrived from Fez, and that France must take measures to rescue French and other European residents. This was no breach of the Algeciras Act, he argued. There was no intention of occupying the capital or infringing the sovereignty of the Sultan or the independence of his realm. Kiderlen rejoined that he had full confidence in the sincerity of the French Government, but events sometimes produced unintended results. If French troops remained in Fez, so that the Sultan only ruled with the aid of French bayonets, Germany would regard the Algeciras Act as finished and would resume complete liberty of action. He followed up his warning with

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXIX, ch. 227, cp. Pick, *New Light on Agadir*, *Contemporary Review*, September 1937.

a Memorandum designed to ginger up the Kaiser. "A Sultan who can only maintain himself with the aid of French bayonets no longer provides the guarantees for the independence of his country which it was the whole aim of the Algeciras Act to preserve. There will be no alternative to recognising the change effected by the force of events and giving a new direction to our Moroccan policy." All signatories of the Act would regain their liberty of action. "The occupation of Fez would prepare the way for the swallowing of Morocco by France. We should obtain nothing by protests, and should suffer a moral defeat which it would be hard to bear. We must therefore decide on an object in the coming negotiations which would incline the French to compensations. If they establish themselves in Fez out of anxiety for their nationals, we too have the right to defend our own. We have large German firms in Mogador and Agadir. German ships could go to these ports for the protection of these firms. They could be stationed there quite peacefully, just to prevent other Powers occupying these most important ports in south Morocco first." Here was the new course—to take pledges and await a French offer. The Memorandum was approved by the Kaiser, who, during this visit to England, assured King George that Germany would never fight for Morocco. She desired the open door and hoped for colonial compensation.

Events moved quickly, for on May 21 French troops entered Fez, and Spain occupied the towns of Larache and Alkasar in the zone hypothetically assigned to her by the secret Franco-Spanish treaty of 1904. On June 11 Jules Cambon repeated the declaration that France had no desire to infringe the Algeciras Act and intended to recall her troops from the capital as soon as possible. It was too late for such soothing syrup to have effect. "I am still very anxious about Morocco", remarked the Chancellor. "German opinion is on the alert. The influence of France is growing, whether she wills it or not. If you leave Fez, you will have to return within a year. In Germany people will say that German interests are being neglected, and I foresee the possibility of extremely grave difficulties." "Perhaps", replied the Ambassador, "but no one can prevent Morocco falling under our influence some day. It seems to me that we could examine the questions which interest us, and seek to afford German opinion the satisfactions which would allow it to watch without anxiety the development of French influence in Morocco." The Chancellor

advised the Ambassador to visit the Foreign Minister at Kissingen.

The situation in Morocco, began Kiderlen, had been completely transformed, with forces under French officers throughout the country and the Sultan at the orders of France. "Have you forgotten the pact of 1909, which recognises French political influence?" interjected Cambon. "Influence is not Protectorate", retorted Kiderlen. "You are on the road to a veritable Protectorate. That is not in the pacts of 1906 and 1909, any more than your occupation of the Shawia and the east." The Ambassador remarked that it was not easy in dealing with an uncivilised Government to fix how far influence could go, and proposed a general discussion like that between England and France in 1903. "I agree", replied Kiderlen. "If we keep to Morocco, we shall not succeed. It is useless to prop up a tottering structure." At this point Cambon uttered a *caveat*. "If you want part of Morocco, French opinion would not stand it. One could look elsewhere." "Yes", replied Kiderlen, "but you must tell us what you wish." At parting he exclaimed: "Bring us back something from Paris."

Till this moment the policy of Germany had been irreproachable. She possessed both treaty rights and commercial interests in Morocco. Warnings conveyed in courteous terms had produced no effect. French troops had entered Fez, but no hint of a *solatium* had come from Paris till June 11, and then in the vaguest form. It came too late, for Kiderlen had made up his mind to act.<sup>1</sup> As long ago as April he had told his friend Weizsäcker, the Württemberg Premier, that he was meditating the occupation of Agadir. The action of Spain suggested that the hour had struck. A Foreign Office Memorandum, drafted on May 30, argued that north Morocco would soon be French, that military domination would involve commercial privilege, and that French public opinion would veto a serious offer. A Sultan who could only rule with foreign help was not the sovereign ruler envisaged by the Algeiras Act. Germany should resume full freedom of action, and follow up her declaration by sending cruisers to Mogador and Agadir. France would then offer compensation, and no storm was likely to arise. If she took it quietly England would not make difficulties, and she might be told that Germany was ready for a deal if compensation in the French Congo were

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXIX, ch. 228.

offered. The Chancellor accepted the plan, though he admits in his apologia that it was sensational and disquieting and confesses that Germany's ablest diplomat had lived too long in the Near East. Moreover Kiderlen had contacts with the Pan-Germans, whom Bethmann abhorred.

The first step was to secure the Kaiser's assent, and on June 26 Bethmann and Kiderlen visited him at Kiel. "Ships approved", telegraphed the Foreign Minister to the Wilhelmstrasse, and the *Panther* was ordered to Agadir. The reasons were explained in notes to Paris and London on July 1. The new French Foreign Minister, de Selves, complained of such action when France was about to initiate friendly negotiations, but there was no more excitement in France than had been expected. "The answers of the Powers to our Morocco *démarche*", wired Bethmann to the Kaiser on July 3, "are so far satisfactory." The Russian Acting Minister, he added, agreed that the Moroccan controversy ought to be finally liquidated. Aehrenthal described the German position as very good. The British press, except for some Conservative organs, was satisfactory. So was the French, for most journals interpreted Germany's act as an invitation to negotiations. It was a false dawn. France and England, dreading fresh surprises, were stirred to the depths, and Kiderlen was in no yielding mood.

On July 15 the Chancellor wired to his master that Kiderlen was claiming the whole French Congo as compensation for leaving Morocco to France, and that a favourable result could only be secured by a very firm stand. To secure the whole French Congo, he added, would involve the cession of some German territory, perhaps in Togoland. The Kaiser was alarmed. Precious time, he complained, had been lost. Instead of awaiting Cambon's offers Germany should have put forward her demands in May, when, owing to the march on Fez and his visit to London, England was in friendlier mood. Now she would stand by the French. Kiderlen seemed to wish to go beyond the limits hitherto agreed. "If Your Excellency and the Foreign Secretary think a menacing attitude necessary, His Majesty must at once return. In his absence it cannot be done. His Majesty begs for a prompt explanation." Kiderlen promptly drafted a letter of resignation. "He who announces in advance that he will not fight can achieve nothing in politics."

Bethmann, who was so far in agreement with the Foreign

Secretary, did not forward the letter to the Kaiser. There was no need to return, he wired. France had received no menace, and none was in contemplation. The negotiations would be rather difficult and take time. Two days later he defended the action of the Government in a lengthy telegram. Nothing could be done till the French, spurred on by the Spanish advance, established military posts and sent troops to Fez. Only when Cambon hinted at colonial concessions could negotiations begin. So far, however, no acceptable offer had been made. Kiderlen's advice to take a very strong line was prompted by the stubborn attitude of France. "Without substantial concessions we cannot leave Morocco to the French. France, England and Russia were prepared for a German protest when the French began to undermine the Act by their march to Fez. If we disappoint this expectation, and calmly watch France breaking a solemn treaty and securing a large and valuable colonial possession, our prestige will suffer an intolerable blow, not only for the moment but in regard to all future international action." Kiderlen had therefore asked for the whole French Congo, though not as a definitive demand. If the French continued to ignore German claims, it would be necessary to stand by the Algeiras Act. "We should then have to ask them to state the precise time by which they would have evacuated Morocco, including Casablanca. If not, we should have to insist on the execution of the Act by every means. We must, however, try our utmost to avoid this alternative. But we shall only do so by such firmness in the negotiations on the compensation issue that the French see that we desire to make our will prevail. . . . France rightly attaches immense moral and material value to the acquisition of Morocco. With England and Spain she can easily arrange. If we give her a free hand, renounce occupation in south Morocco, and thereby help her to round off her great North African colonial empire, that is such a great service that it obviously requires a high price." The negotiations, concluded the telegram, had followed agreed lines. Permission was asked and given to continue them.

At this point Kaiser and Chancellor fade out of the picture, and the masterful Foreign Secretary assumes control.<sup>1</sup> The demand for the whole of the French Congo, even if accompanied by the offer of Togoland, was rejected in Paris and produced the strident warning of the Mansion House speech.

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXIX, chs. 230 and 231.



The storm provoked by this dramatic intervention was quickly allayed, but the sky remained dark. Kiderlen's talk with Cambon on July 28 revealed a gulf which nothing seemed able to bridge. On the same evening he confided his apprehensions to Bethmann, and on the following day the two statesmen journeyed to Swinemünde to report to their master. The Kaiser played a moderating part throughout and was vehemently denounced by the Jingo press. On August 4 Kiderlen told Cambon that Germany would be satisfied with part of the French Congo. There was far less expectation of war in Berlin than in Paris or London. When the Minister of War pointed out the dangers of the usual autumn manœuvres in the event of sudden hostilities, Bethmann and Kiderlen encouraged him to proceed on the usual lines. In case of need the mobilisation decree could always be held back till the troops had returned to their stations. Whatever secret encouragement Kiderlen may have given to the Pan-Germans, the Chancellor played a straight game throughout. He was informed of the progress of the negotiations and reported at intervals to his master. On September 16 he wired that the latest French proposals went far to meet German claims. He saw no reason for the panic on the Bourse at the beginning of September, and after August he was never seriously alarmed.

The treaties of November 4, 1911, met with a mixed reception. The Colonial Secretary resigned on the ground that French concessions in the Congo were worthless, an unprecedented occurrence in the land of discipline. The Chancellor himself, only too thankful to have averted a conflict, was tolerably satisfied. "Perhaps we may congratulate ourselves that things have turned out thus," he remarked to Jules Cambon.<sup>1</sup> "There would have been misunderstandings and friction which now will not occur. You have become the masters of Morocco." Now the negotiations were over he resumed his rightful place as the chief spokesman of the Reich. In the agitated debate which opened on November 10 he made his anxiously awaited statement.<sup>2</sup> French authority in Morocco had increased as that of the Sultan declined. The ruler who summoned foreign troops to his assistance was no longer the independent potentate postulated by the Act of Algeciras. France had been told that Germany was ready to consider her changed position in return for more precise commercial guarantees. Since no positive proposals were received, while

<sup>1</sup> *D.D.F.* I, 30-2.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T.* VII, 665-76.

French military power continued to spread over the country, a warship was sent to Agadir, primarily for the protection of German nationals. This had been represented in the foreign press as a provocation and a threat. "We provoke and threaten no one, but we protect our rights." No demand had been made for the removal of foreign troops, which might have caused internal disturbances, and the acquisition of territory had been ruled out by the agreement of 1909. Germany had recognised that the Moors could not keep order, that the intervention of a foreign Power was required, and that that Power could only be France. Compensation had been obtained in the shape of guarantees for German interests in Morocco and a slice of the French Congo which rounded off the Cameroons. The Congo settlement had been unjustly denounced. "There certainly exist among these new acquisitions tracts of little value, perhaps of no value at all; but this is also the case in our other colonies. . . . On the other hand we receive valuable strips of country. . . . We gain access to the Congo and the Ubanghi. . . . We obtain a most important new colonial territory. You should not reproach us with trying to get what we can, because Germany has only now, unfortunately much too late, joined the ranks of colonial nations. . . . From a mere sand-box, to what has South West Africa grown!"

After defending the bargain, the Chancellor passed to the negotiations. The reproaches of weakness were undeserved. Neither side had ever used language or mooted ideas incompatible with the honour of the other. There was never any occasion for the banging of the fist on the table which was recommended to the Government, and he did not approve of threatening gestures. Germany was strong enough to draw her sword in case of need. Contrary to statements in the press, the Emperor had identified himself with the nation, which had been determined to defend its honour and vital interests. That Germany had retreated before England in consequence of the Lloyd George speech was untrue. The Government had accomplished what it intended, but it was reproached for not trying for something more. Southern Morocco could only be obtained by war. Moreover its defence would be a burden. The treaty of 1909 had recognised that Germany had no political aims. "I claim it as being particularly creditable to our policy that we did not pursue the utopia of the acquisition of land in Morocco. . . . Morocco was like a festering wound in our relations not only with France but

with England. The French advance to Fez led to an acute stage which rendered an operation necessary. We have performed this operation in order to heal the wound." Morocco was *de facto* under French influence before the march to Fez. Nothing had been given up which had not already gone, economic guarantees had been obtained, and a considerable colonial possession had been secured. "We do not expect praise, but we also fear no reproach."

The longest speech ever delivered by the Chancellor failed to satisfy his critics, and on the following day he launched a vigorous counter-attack.<sup>1</sup> Heydebrand, the Conservative leader, had fiercely denounced the Lloyd George speech, which had revealed England as the enemy. "It is not by yielding to threats but by the German sword that we can maintain our position in the world." Such passionate and extravagant language, replied Bethmann, might serve party purposes but was injurious to the Empire. "A strong man does not need to carry his sword in his mouth." Everyone was surprised that a man generally regarded as a detached philosopher could display such energy and courage, for courage was required to rebuke the leader of a party on whose votes he relied. Moreover Heydebrand's attack had been demonstratively applauded by the Crown Prince, whom it was the unpleasant duty of the Chancellor to rebuke in the presence of his father. His obvious desire to pour oil on the waters was gratefully recognised by Grey, who expressed to Metternich his highest admiration for the second speech.

The healing influence of these declarations was marred by Kiderlen's subsequent statement to the Budget Committee in which, without consulting the British Government, he gave a detailed account of the interviews between Grey and Metternich at the time of the Mansion House incident. The waters were further ruffled by the indiscretions of Captain Faber. Here again Bethmann, eager to rebuild the bridges, retained his self-control, and wired Kiderlen's tactful reference to the subject in the Budget Commission. The British Government, declared the latter, had feared a German naval attack, and had therefore ordered the British Fleet to be placed on a war footing. According to Captain Faber, orders had been given to answer the approach of German ships with fire. Germany had never thought of attacking the British fleet. On neither side were any measures of mobilisation taken. In conveying the

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* VII, 679-82.

message Metternich expressed the hope that in his forthcoming speech Grey would co-operate in the Chancellor's attempt to diminish the antagonism.

Grey's historic utterance of November 27 was a disappointment, as the Chancellor indicated when he addressed the Reichstag on Morocco on December 5 for the third time.<sup>1</sup> Why England believed that Germany desired a naval base on the Atlantic coast he could not understand. Neither France nor Russia shared these suspicions. If doubts arose, he would have been ready at any moment to dispel them. Grey had complained of German silence between July 4 and 21. His declaration of July 4 did not seem to require an answer. But on July 12 when the British Ambassador deprecated negotiations *à trois* between Germany, France and Spain, he was told that there was no such intention. If this was insufficient, England could have obtained further explanations at any moment. Responsibility for the crisis lay with the Powers who in 1904 disposed of Morocco without considering German interests. The new settlement affected no English interests. Germany sincerely desired peace and friendship with England, but the development of good relations would need a friendly policy on the part of the latter. "We have passed through a difficult, serious and threatening time. This the nation has rightly felt. May it now clearly perceive what it owes to itself—neither depression nor provocative arrogance, but a free outlook, cool blood, calm strength, and steadfast unity in great national questions." The speech was acclaimed by the whole non-Socialist press and the confidence of the Conservatives was regained.

Dining quietly with the Chancellor on December 17, Goschen asked if he had had time lately to play his usual Beethoven Sonata before going to bed.<sup>2</sup> "My dear friend", was the reply, "how can I play my beloved old music with the air full of modern discords?" Speaking not as Chancellor but as a friend, he complained that Grey's speech was very cold. Though there had been some friendly words, too many "ifs" were tacked on to them. Goschen retorted that his host's last speech had not been remarkable for warmth. Bethmann agreed, adding that the irritation of opinion made it necessary. What had he meant, asked Goschen, by his peroration, Deeds not words? Had he any particular question in mind? Almost everything that had happened since he became Chancellor, was

<sup>1</sup> G. and T. VII, 757-63.

<sup>2</sup> G. and T. VII, 788-9 and 795.

the reply. In their first interview he had stated his chief object to be the restoration of good relations. His efforts had not met with whole-hearted support, and Anglo-German relations were worse than in 1909. The British Government was too reserved. "Why on earth, for instance, after the conversation with Metternich on July 4, did not Sir Edward Grey tell you to come and have a confidential talk with me and ask me for information?" Simply because his language to Metternich, replied Goschen, showed clearly that more information was desired. It would have been undignified, argued Bethmann, to provide unasked information in addition to that already given, which ought to have sufficed. Goschen reported the conversation in a private letter to his chief, who admitted that, with the elections in prospect and German opinion as it was, the Chancellor could hardly have spoken otherwise. The respect of Grey and Bethmann for one another had survived the rude test of Agadir, and both were ready to try again.

#### IV

At the opening of January, 1912, Ballin suggested to Cassel that the First Lord of the Admiralty should visit Berlin.<sup>1</sup> Churchill, who erroneously believed the invitation to have come from the Kaiser, felt obliged to decline. On January 29, however, Cassel presented to the Kaiser, in the presence of Ballin and the Chancellor, the following Memorandum drawn up by Grey, Churchill and Lloyd George.

"1. Fundamental. Naval superiority recognised as essential to Great Britain. Present German naval programme and expenditure not to be increased but if possible retarded and reduced.

2. England sincerely desires not to interfere with German colonial expansion. To give effect to this she is prepared forthwith to discuss whatever the German aspirations in that direction may be. England will be glad to know that there is a field or special points where she can help Germany.

3. Proposals for reciprocal assurances debarring either Power from joining in aggressive designs or combinations against the other would be welcome."

The following reply was handed to Cassel.

"1. Fundamental. The German Government welcomes

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXI, ch. 243; *G. and T.* VI, ch. 49. William II, Bethmann, Tirpitz and Haldane give their version in their respective apologies.

with pleasure the step taken by the British Government to approach the German Government through Sir E. Cassel in view of improving the relations between the two countries.

The German Government is in full accord with the terms proposed in the draft submitted by Sir E. Cassel with the following exception : that this year's (1912) estimates must be included in the present German naval programme inasmuch as all the arrangements have already been completed.

The most effectual way to bring the negotiations rapidly forward would be if Sir E. Grey would pay a visit to H.M. the Emperor as soon as possible. H.M. would view such a visit with great pleasure."

Cassel, added the Chancellor, in reporting the news to Metternich, declared that Grey would be willing to visit Berlin if the conclusion of an agreement was assured. At this moment a sketch of the new Navy Bill was presented to Cassel, who forwarded it to Churchill. Cassel believed that the German modifications would be accepted, and that Grey and Churchill would arrive in Berlin in the following week. His optimism was not shared by the more experienced Metternich, who wired that a change in English policy was improbable unless the *Novelle* was withdrawn. On the other hand an attempted rapprochement would help Grey at a time when his policy was generally condemned by his party. Even a platonic recognition of English naval superiority without a real guarantee against English aggression would scarcely find acceptance in Germany. Despite this cold *douche* from Carlton House Terrace the plan proceeded according to programme. On February 3 a telegram from Cassel to Ballin reached the Chancellor announcing that Haldane would visit Berlin to prepare the ground. The new German programme, it was added, would necessitate a serious increase of British expenditure, which would make the negotiation difficult if not impossible. If, on the other hand, such an increase could be avoided by a modification of the *tempo* or in some other way, and if there was a fair prospect of some naval arrangement, the British Government would continue the negotiation. Bethmann replied that a naval concession was possible in return for satisfactory political guarantees. Though each party believed that the initiative had come from the other, both sides desired a *détente*.

At their first meeting at the British Embassy on February 8 Haldane gave the Chancellor the King's good wishes for the

conversations, and explained that he had come merely to survey the ground. The conversation, as reported by Haldane, may be summarised in dialogue form.

*Haldane.* Germany is piling up armaments and is the centre of a powerful group, so other Powers had to come together. The two groups, however, might be on very friendly terms if there was more mutual understanding and confidence. Now is the time for a new departure. Morocco is out of the way, and there are no secret agreements with France or Russia.

*Bethmann.* What about your military preparations last summer?

*Haldane.* They were merely to bring the army near the standard of readiness which Germany has long attained. It was purely departmental. I myself, no enemy to Germany, was responsible for them. We could not be caught unprepared. Our measures were no evidence of hostility or intention to attack. If Germany had really intended to crush France, which I do not believe, we should have intervened.

*Bethmann.* I do not wish to hamper your freedom of action in such a case, but, as you know, I desire a formula of neutrality.

*Haldane.* We have treaty obligations to Belgium, Portugal and Japan, as well as our interest in France.

*Bethmann.* I see that a reciprocal promise of non-aggression is not enough.

*Haldane.* Would you be satisfied with mutual undertakings against unprovoked attacks and against all combinations and agreements for such a purpose?

*Bethmann.* It is very difficult to define aggression. If the right spirit is there, some such words as yours might meet the case.

*Haldane.* What is the use of a solemn agreement if Germany is going to increase her navy and we have to follow suit? Our island Power needs a substantial preponderance in battleships.

*Bethmann.* It is absolutely essential for Germany to have a third squadron ready for war. Owing to our system of recruiting, for three months in the year we have virtually no fleet fully prepared.

*Haldane.* In that case we should have to increase our battle squadrons in home waters and perhaps bring some ships from the Mediterranean.

*Bethmann.* Would that be necessary if we made a friendly agreement?

*Haldane.* We should have no choice. The proposal to add a third ship every year to the German programme is still more serious. We should have to lay down two keels for every extra ship. That would cost money and cause ill feeling. Some modification of your naval plans is needed if the agreement is to be a success.

*Bethmann.* The new squadron is vital, and a new squadron involves new ships. Can you suggest an alternative?

*Haldane.* Why not space out the new construction?

*Bethmann.* I will consider it and consult experts, but the Admirals are very difficult.

*Haldane.* Ours too.

*Bethmann.* Suppose we were to agree on these two topics (a political formula and the fleet), what would follow?

*Haldane.* All sorts of things. We are free traders.

*Bethmann.* Yes, the open door for us both.

*Haldane.* I wish we could work together a great deal more.

*Bethmann.* In Africa, for instance.

*Haldane.* In Africa particularly. But the island of Timor, where I think you have a treaty right, would mean trouble with Australia.

*Bethmann.* I will gladly meet you on that.

*Haldane.* Then there is the Baghdad railway.

*Bethmann.* I think we can meet you on that too.

*Haldane.* And perhaps you could share in commercial enterprises in our sphere of interest in Persia.

*Bethmann.* If we can agree on the first two matters, would you like to return and consult your colleagues before we talk about the other questions?

*Haldane.* There is no need. I know enough of their views for the present purpose of surveying the ground, which I have done. I have told you everything in my mind.

*Bethmann.* I have felt that. It has been a very helpful conversation. For two and a half years I have striven for an agreement. I recognise that you wish to preserve in full your existing relations with France and Russia. We too have obligations with which you will not desire to interfere.

It was evident, concluded Haldane's report written immediately after the interview, that the Chancellor would have difficulties, though not with his master. "But I was impressed with what appeared to me to be his absolute sincerity and goodwill, and I have confidence that, so far as he is concerned, he wishes to do his very best. I shall doubtless know much more



for better or worse shortly." The same evening Bethmann instructed Metternich to thank the King for his expression of confidence in German policy as manifested by the Haldane Mission. "I shall try, in co-operation with the English Minister, to find an arrangement which carries out the wishes of both parties. For us the chief thing is the restoration of trustful relations."

On the following day, February 9, Haldane discussed the naval problem with the Kaiser and Tirpitz. The latter explained that the *Novelle* proposed to add three ships in the next six years. They were essential for the new third squadron, which was needed if they were to have a fleet available at any time. Haldane argued that a political agreement would not be taken seriously unless accompanied by a large modification of the shipbuilding programme. After vainly pleading for the dropping of one of the three new ships, he proposed the spacing of their construction. The Kaiser was pleased and reported to Bethmann that the suggestion was accepted. When the political agreement was published, Tirpitz would announce the creation of a third squadron in which the three ships would only be laid down in 1913, 1916 and 1919. At dinner Haldane found the Chancellor depressed by his opposition to the new Fleet Law. Later in the evening he explained to Jules Cambon, who was a little nervous, that we were not going to be disloyal to France or Russia and that better Anglo-German relations would benefit France. A *détente*, interjected Cambon, not an entente? He hoped for something more than a *détente* later on, replied Haldane, if his very limited Mission succeeded.

On February 10 Haldane received a strong hint from Stumm, a high official of the Wilhelmstrasse. The Chancellor feared that the British Cabinet would consider Tirpitz's concession too small. He was not going to let the Admiral wreck an agreement which was the dream of his life. It would help him if he were pressed for further naval concessions. Thus primed Haldane held his third conversation with Bethmann. The Chancellor realised how British opinion would react to the increase of ship-building, but the difficulties were almost insuperable. Public opinion in Germany expected a new law and a third squadron, and these he must have. The third squadron, rejoined Haldane, would make Germany stronger. We should have to keep up the Two Power Standard, and the British people would resent the increasing burden. It was a

question for the experts, replied the Chancellor, whether a greater retardation was possible.

The conversation now turned to the political formula. Haldane brought home a draft incorporating elements provided by both parties.

1. The high contracting Powers assure each other mutually of their desire for peace and friendship.

2. They will not, either of them, make any unprovoked attack upon the other, nor join in any combination or design against the other for purposes of aggression, nor become party to any plan or any naval or military combination alone or in conjunction with any other Power directed to such an end.

3. If either of the high contracting parties becomes entangled in a war in which it cannot be said to be the aggressor, the other will at least observe towards the Power so entangled a benevolent neutrality and use its utmost endeavour for the localisation of the conflict.

4. The duty of neutrality which arises from the preceding article has no application in so far as it may not be reconcilable with existing agreements which the high contracting parties have already made. The making of new agreements which render it impossible for either to observe neutrality towards the other beyond what is provided by the preceding limitation is excluded in conformity with the provision contained in Article 2.

5. The high contracting parties declare that they will do all in their power to prevent differences and misunderstanding between either of them and other Powers.

The naval question having been reserved for the experts and the political formula for the British Cabinet, the two statesmen passed to a third aspect of Anglo-German relations. Bethmann's proposals were mainly concerned with Turkey and the Middle East. England should not oppose the completion of the Baghdad railway, and in particular should consent to the increase of Turkish customs. Germany in return would concede an exceptional position in the Baghdad-Basra section. If England built railways in her zone in Persia, she should allow Germany to participate. In return Germany would recognise England's political interests in South Persia and the Gulf. She would assist her diplomatically to obtain a concession from Turkey for the Basra-Koweit section of the line and for a harbour at Koweit. The two countries should promise to exchange views on all questions which might arise with a view

to mutually satisfactory solutions. Each should influence its friends in favour of the other. The agreement might be for ten years with automatic prolongation.

The last main topic was Africa. Bethmann asked for Zanzibar and Pemba (which, according to his report, Haldane was willing to give) in return for a special position for England in the Baghdad-Basra line. He desired the portion of Angola reserved for England by the secret treaty of 1898, and agreed to England having the Portuguese portion of Timor. If Germany ever obtained a belt across the Lower Congo, in friendly bargain with France and Belgium, England might have the Katanga triangle. When the Chancellor asked for the Seal and Penguin Islands off Angra Pequena, Haldane replied that they might belong to South Africa, in which case it would be difficult. "He was thoroughly desirous of meeting our wishes", concluded this portion of Haldane's report, "and said to me; I am here to make a bargain with you. We must look at this thing on both sides from a high point of view, and if you have any difficulties tell me, and I will see whether I can get round them for you." The interviews left an inefaceable impression of sincerity and goodwill. "When we parted he held me by the hand, and said that, whether success or failure crowned the effort which was the greatest object of his life, he should never forget that I had met him with an openness and sympathy for his difficulties which made the recollection of these days for him a delightful one. I reciprocated his sentiments no less warmly." To the end of his life Haldane retained his belief in the sincerity of "the good Chancellor."<sup>1</sup>

Grey told Metternich that he was immensely impressed by Haldane's report, and desired England to rise to the occasion. Friendly references to the visit were made in both Houses of Parliament and in the Reichstag. Unfortunately the intensive study of the *Novelle* revealed an increase of naval power scarcely calculated to facilitate a reconciliation. On February 22 Haldane and Grey spoke gravely to Metternich about the programme, which, independently of the three extra ships, constituted a large expansion of the Navy Law. The increase of *personnel*, in particular, went beyond the needs of a third squadron, and pointed to the formation of new units. The British naval estimates would have to be largely increased, and under these circumstances a substantial political agreement

<sup>1</sup> Letters to his mother published in Maurice's *Haldane*, I, ch. 12, supplement the testimony of *Before the War* and the Autobiography.

would hardly be practicable. Two days later Grey handed Metternich an Admiralty Memorandum, and the conversation was renewed. The British Government, remarked the Ambassador, was less forthcoming than Haldane, for instance in regard to Zanzibar and Pemba. Grey admitted it, explaining that treaties relating to Zanzibar deprived England of a free hand. The Dutch, as he had already said, had a pre-emption on Timor, and the cession of territory without an equivalent would be difficult. An arrangement about the southern end of the Baghdad railway depended partly on Turkey. The first question, however, was whether a compromise on the *Novelle* was possible, for without it a political agreement would not produce the desired effect. Metternich complained that this talk completely altered the picture painted by Haldane. Though the negotiations dragged on for weeks, the life had gone out of them within a fortnight of the visit to Berlin.

Bethmann was grieved but refused to despair. "The basis is shifted", he complained. "England made us the following offers through Haldane, not formally, it is true, but in the name of the Cabinet: 1. A political agreement. 2. Angola. 3. Support for the Belgian Congo. 4. Zanzibar and Pemba. In return he asked: 1. Slowing down of the construction of the three *Novelle* Dreadnoughts. 2. Timor. 3. Favours in the Baghdad railway. Haldane recognised the need of a *Novelle* with a third squadron and increase of *personnel*, which, he declared, would not incommode England. Now England drops part of her offer, is silent on the political agreement, and criticises the increase of *personnel* and the submarines, despite our concession on the rate of building. Haldane is completely disavowed. We are nevertheless still ready for a political agreement on the Haldane basis, and shall be glad to continue the discussion of proposals of this nature." These notes were worked up into a lengthy memorandum handed to the British Government on March 6, and Metternich was instructed to express the painful surprise created by the change of attitude.

If Bethmann was pained, his master was furious. The Haldane offer, he wired to the Chancellor, had been dropped, and the proposed transfer of the Mediterranean squadron to the North Sea should be answered by an enlarged *Novelle* and mobilisation. "Memorandum must be presented to-morrow, the sixth. So the Defence Bill must be published on the evening of the sixth. If not, I shall order the Ministers of War and Marine to publish it. My patience, and that of the

German people, is at an end." The same day he despatched an angry telegram to Metternich without consulting his Chancellor. "From your conversation with Haldane it is clear that he, like the Cabinet, despite all assurances to the contrary, has abandoned the basis of our negotiations, - by which I stand, namely acceptance of the *Novelle* with slower construction. Increase of the *personnel* must not be discussed. If England withdraws her ships from the Mediterranean to the North Sea, it will be regarded here as a threat of war and be answered by an enlarged *Novelle* and perhaps mobilisation."

These fiery telegrams were too much for the patient Chancellor, who wired that he could not undertake responsibility for the publication of the *Novelle* till Metternich had reported the delivery of the Memorandum. He then despatched an anguished letter asking leave to resign.<sup>1</sup> His position as the chief constitutional adviser of the Emperor had been ignored, and his methods were no longer approved. Though England complained of the *Novelle*, negotiations should go on. If they failed, the odium should not attach to Germany. Any other policy would increase the tension with England and stimulate the growing chauvinism of France. "France will be so provocative and arrogant that we shall have to attack her. In such a war she will automatically receive the help of Russia and doubtless of England too, whereas for our allies the *casus foederis* will not arise, and we shall have to beg their aid or their neutrality. I cannot be responsible for creating such a situation. If we are forced into war we will fight and, with God's help, win. But to unleash such a war, without our honour or vital interests being involved, I should regard as a crime against Germany's destiny, even if we could count on complete victory." Even that was not the case, for the navy would be beaten by the English and French fleets. In virtue of his office he was responsible for policy before God, the country, history and his conscience. Since his master ignored this responsibility, he begged leave to resign. The impressionable ruler swung round after an interview, and the publication of the *Novelle* was postponed.

The brief crisis over, Bethmann continued his gallant but unavailing efforts to regain the friendship of England. His chief aim to-day, as ever since 1909, he wrote in a memorandum of March 8, was a political agreement. If England really desired relations of confidence, why could they not agree on a

<sup>1</sup> Jäckh, *Kiderlen-Waechter*, II, 159-61.

formula, even if it did not go so far as he wished? Without it, people would say that she had initiated the negotiations in order to sabotage the *Novelle*. On March 12 he wired to Metternich that the *Novelle* was being held back in the hope that England would resume neutrality discussions and thereby render possible a fresh consideration of the armaments question. Haldane should be confidentially approached, and the Kaiser might perhaps consent to a further concession. On receiving this telegram Metternich invited Haldane to the Embassy for an important communication. He gathered that, if the British Government offered a suitable political formula, the *Novelle* would be considerably reduced. Time pressed, as a statement in the Reichstag was due.

It looked as if Bethmann had beaten Tirpitz, though Goschen doubted the victory, since the Admiral had a stronger will. Grey did not move an inch. His new formula was ready on March 14. The Ambassador explained that the phrasing would not satisfy Berlin, as the word neutrality did not occur. He begged for a promise if war was forced on Germany, though of course it would only be valid if British naval wishes were met. The *Novelle* would not be withdrawn but it might be cut down. What reductions were desired? A postponement of ships would be comparatively easy, a reduction of men much more difficult. Grey argued that his formula required no addition. If Germany ever wished to crush France, England might have to intervene, though she would never support French aggression. He explained afresh that the word neutrality would convey an impression that more was meant than was said, and would alienate France. Metternich repeated that no other term would modify the *Novelle*. Bethmann, rejoined Grey, inspired the greatest confidence, but he might at any moment be overthrown. All he could offer was to amend the first sentence of his formula, so that it would run: England will neither make nor join in any unprovoked attack.

On receiving Metternich's report the Chancellor made a passionate appeal to his master. Some concession on armaments, he believed, would secure a satisfactory political agreement. Churchill had recently said as much to Ballin. To publish the *Novelle* would frustrate an understanding. In June 1911 Tirpitz had pronounced the existing Navy Law sufficient. The *Novelle* was the offspring of the excitement of the Agadir summer and the rumours of an English attack.

Since then it had been learned that England for her part had feared a German attack and had taken defensive measures. "The question is whether we destroy the possibility of an understanding by a needless and premature publication, or whether by the publication of the *Novelle* we give the signal for the armaments race and with it the probability of an Anglo-German war, with its consequential extensions, this year or next." A stiff telegram from the Wilhelmstrasse to Metternich on March 18 registered the failure of Bethmann's latest endeavour. The revised formula was dismissed as worthless, for aggression was an elastic word. Grey feared a change in the orientation of German policy, forgetting that an agreement would bind both Powers equally. Moreover the person of the Emperor guaranteed the continuance of a policy of peace. Only a neutrality agreement, approaching a defensive alliance, could render possible a serious modification of the *Novelle*. When Metternich communicated this message on March 19, Grey expressed surprise that his draft formula of non-aggression was so little valued at Berlin. Germany asked far more than England had given to any nation except Japan. A promise of absolute neutrality was impossible. France and Russia, rejoined the Ambassador, needed no guarantee, since there were no differences.

On March 21 a detailed reply to the German Memorandum of March 6, correcting the account of Haldane's declarations, was despatched to Berlin. He had made no formal offers, for both parties were on a voyage of discovery. For instance he had merely mentioned Zanzibar and Pemba as items in a possible deal. In discussing a neutrality formula he had emphasised the difficulties. The complaint that the British Government had shifted its ground was unfounded. The Memorandum concluded with renewed assurances of good feeling. Bethmann appreciated its friendly tone, and, speaking to Goschen informally, he admitted that Haldane had explained that all his remarks were *ad referendum*. He had derived the impression, however, that he was speaking the mind of the King and the Cabinet. Haldane had said "We are ready to hand you over Zanzibar and Pemba." He could not forget those words, which had caused him such surprise, and he had regarded the offer as definite. Turning to the *Novelle* he remarked that the proposals were very modest. How could the papers find fault with them? Why should England build extra ships in consequence? Germany would

never rival her at sea. A good margin, replied Goschen, was a matter of life and death to Englishmen. When asked his view of Grey's political formula, Bethmann replied that he would be laughed at if he produced it as a reason for reducing the demands of the Naval Party or as the basis of an understanding.

The naval and neutrality negotiations may be said to have closed with a friendly conversation between Grey and Metternich on March 29. The British Cabinet could not go beyond its formula. England's quarrels with France and Russia had been made up without formulas by concrete agreements. Grey hoped and believed that such would also be the case with Germany. Metternich was less sanguine. Germany had asked for neutrality if a war was forced upon her, but had asked in vain. Both parties realised that it was the end of the long chapter which had opened in August 1909. "Since the English Government," wrote Bethmann to Metternich on April 3, "has not felt able to offer us a satisfactory neutrality agreement, the possibility of modifying the *Novelle* falls to the ground. If Sir E. Grey says that our suggested formula would go further than any treaty concluded by England with a European Power except Portugal, that is true enough. But he forgets that our counter-offer was without precedent. In informing him you should add that we are ready to continue the exchange of opinion concerning colonial and territorial questions. The German Government would prefer to combine all the questions into a single agreement dealing with the Portuguese colonies, the minor colonial questions, the transfer of Zanzibar and Pemba, the Baghdad railway, and South Persia."

Both countries proceeded to enlarge their fleets, and British ships were transferred from the Mediterranean to the North Sea. The *Novelle* was carried by a large majority, and British supplementary estimates were attributed by Churchill to that cause. Metternich was succeeded by Marschall, who, during his brief sojourn in London, informally suggested a neutrality pledge. But the time for the discussion of a political understanding and a limitation of the German fleet was past. Each party had demanded what the other declined to give. For the next two years Anglo-German discussions hinged on the concrete issues of the Baghdad railway and the Portuguese colonies. The Haldane Mission had failed in its immediate purpose but not in its wider aim. The confidence of Grey and Haldane



in the sincerity of the Chancellor was unimpaired, though the limits of his power were more clearly perceived. After the first disappointment was over, it was realised that friendly relations might be established and maintained by the settlement of regional issues and by co-operation in the service of peace.

## V

German relations with Italy, which for years had been on a footing of scarcely more than formal courtesy, were subjected to a disagreeable strain by the Tripoli war. Turkish good will, which counted for so much at Berlin, meant little to Rome. The prospect of gaining a foothold on the African coast at a moderate expenditure of blood and money seemed to Italy well worth the temporary embarrassment of her associates. It was the delicate task of the Wilhelmstrasse to hold the scales as evenly as possible between the Turkish friend and the wayward ally. Differences of opinion arose according to the relative importance attached to the Turkish and the Italian combination. While Marschall fought hard for his Turkish *protégé*, Kiderlen strove to keep Italy within the fold. The Chancellor shared the latter's desire to save what was left of the Triple Alliance, and supported him in his duel with the formidable Ambassador at Constantinople.

At the close of 1910 the Italian Foreign Minister informed his allies that action of some sort against Turkey would be necessary.<sup>1</sup> Kiderlen replied that the German Government was ready to support legitimate complaints and begged for further information. The application of force, he added, might have incalculable consequences. Marschall was instructed to influence the Porte in favour of Italy if opportunity allowed, and Jagow, the Ambassador at Rome, warned San Giuliano against too sharp a tone in Constantinople. That Aehrenthal also disliked the prospect of trouble with Turkey, and believed Italian complaints to be exaggerated, was an additional reason for caution. When, however, Italy asked leave to declare that in these matters she was supported by her allies, Bethmann consented on the ground that it would advertise the vitality of the Triple Alliance. On January 19, 1911, San Giuliano confided to Jagow that, in view of Turkey's persistent obstruction of Italian interests, the Government might be compelled by public opinion to occupy Tripoli.

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXX, ch. 232.

The Wilhelmstrasse renewed its warning against violent action. If, however, the Italian Government felt that the moment had come to realise its aspirations, Germany would not stand in its way.

When the Morocco crisis focussed attention on the balance of power in the Mediterranean, and France was about to add a large slice of Africa to her empire, Giolitti and San Giuliano resolved to act. On the announcement of the voyage of the *Panther* to Agadir the Foreign Minister remarked to his Under-Secretary: Tripoli's hour is at hand.<sup>1</sup> On September 28, the day of the ultimatum to Turkey, he apologised to Jagow for embarrassing his allies. He had only announced the decision at the last moment in order to avert the unpleasantness of fruitless mediation. Italy dared wait no longer or her chance might be gone. Germany was no better pleased than Austria at the action of their ally, which the Kaiser denounced as robbery, but throughout she played a minor part.<sup>2</sup> A suggestion that Italy should hold Tripoli in the same way as England held Egypt was rejected by Giolitti. When Aehrenthal sharply warned Italy to keep her hands off the Adriatic coast, Germany stood aloof. Strict neutrality was the only policy, and the Turks understood her position. Marschall foretold that a long war would inevitably produce a Balkan conflagration, and the annexation decree of November 4, received in Berlin without comment, stiffened the attitude of Constantinople.<sup>3</sup>

The prospect of the extension of the struggle to the Aegean led Turkey to consider the closing of the Straits, a measure which would affect Russia more than any other Power.<sup>4</sup> On November 18 Germany and Austria were informed of her intention to ask permission for the passage of Russian warships. What did they think? While Aehrenthal was in no mood to oblige a rival without compensation, Kiderlen argued that to make difficulties would drive Turkey into the English camp. The fear of Russian ships in the Mediterranean was exaggerated for a friendly Turkey would forbid their passage in time of war and a hostile Turkey would always let them through. The Chancellor adopted the arguments and in some cases the words of his subordinate in reporting to the Kaiser, who approved a friendly answer when a formal request from Russia should arrive.

<sup>1</sup> Jagow, *Ursachen und Ausbruch des Weltkrieges*, ch. 4.

<sup>2</sup> G.P. XXX, ch. 233.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, ch. 234.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, chs. 235 and 236.

On December 1 Tcharykov, the Russian Ambassador at Constantinople, asked for an agreement allowing free passage of Russian warships through the Straits and closing them to those of other Powers. Russia offered in return certain railway concessions and a promise of her good offices to bring about an understanding with the Balkan states. Marschall's anger knew no bounds. "The solution of the Straits question in the Russian sense is to every thinking Turk the beginning of the catastrophe, a blow at the heart of the empire. They are quite right. Turkey can lose Tripoli and Cyrenaica and yet remain a powerful empire. But the moment that Russian warships can pass freely through the Straits, the independence of the Empire is gone. . . . The Sultan will gradually sink to the position of the Emir of Bokhara." Kiderlen took the news much less tragically. It was not obvious, Marschall was instructed to say, why Turkey should be so alarmed at a proposal which she was not bound to accept and which required the assent of the Powers. She should ask for details. For the Ambassador's own information he added that Germany had no reason to expose herself at this stage.

On December 6 the Russian Ambassador presented a draft treaty conceding the right of passage on condition that the ships did not stop in the Dardanelles without permission. Russia in return promised support for the existing system of the Straits and the adjacent territories if menaced by foreign arms. The text confirmed the worst suspicions of Marschall, who described it as a ruthless attack not only against Turkey but against Germany. "We must defend ourselves against this stroke regardless of the opinions of Russia's friends in the West. If the Turks saw that our attitude in the question depends on London and Paris, our prestige would be shattered, and they would assume that the Triple Entente was stronger than the Triple Alliance. . . . In my opinion Germany and Austria should immediately inform Turkey that they could not accept such a change of the existing treaties. The Russians could hardly be surprised, since the Potsdam Pact is openly infringed by their latest action. Till now I have told the Porte that I have no instructions, but this cannot go on. If the Turks, who are threatened in their existence from all sides, turn in their extremity to the friendly Germany, I cannot manifest an indifference which would disavow our whole Turkish policy and inevitably drive them into the camp of the Russians and the Western Powers."

Marschall poured out his heart in a private letter to Bethmann, announcing that if Germany accepted the Russian demand for the free passage of the Straits he would have to resign. The Chancellor wired a brief reply drafted by Kiderlen himself. It was for Turkey to accept or reject the Russian proposal. Germany would only be affected if Turkey agreed, and then would be the time to decide whether her interests demanded a veto. Marschall was instructed to calm the Porte, all the more since an interview with Sazonoff in Paris did not suggest an aggressive attitude on the part of the Triple Entente. Moreover Sazonoff, now restored to health, was about to resume control at St. Petersburg.

On December 11, in forwarding to the Kaiser Marschall's latest despatch, the Chancellor defined his own attitude. The Ambassador's view was too gloomy, and the Turkish Foreign Minister was not altogether master of his nerves. German policy stood for the integrity of the Turkish Empire but could go no further than Turkey herself. From Sazonoff's utterances it appeared as if Tcharykov might have gone too far. If, on the other hand, he was acting on secret instructions, he would certainly be disavowed if the enterprise met with irremovable difficulties. It would be a mistake to take a strong line and bind their hands before Turkey had decided her course. The appearance of foreign warships in the Straits in time of peace in no way involved the collapse of Turkish rule. The right of passage could be accompanied by stringent conditions, and a few Turkish torpedo boats in the Dardanelles would guarantee that they were fulfilled.

The cold *douche* from Berlin produced no effect on Marschall, who pointed out that to leave Turkey and Russia to settle the question of the Straits was to hand over the weaker country to its mighty neighbour. It was also to abandon Germany's policy in the last twenty years, which regarded a militarily and economically powerful Turkey as a direct German interest. Austria, so far from agreeing with the German attitude, had informed the Porte that she would hold to the *status quo* until a solution satisfactory to Russia, Turkey and all the signatory Powers was reached. This public difference between the allies showed where Germany's new Eastern policy was leading, and he was forwarding his resignation. In a telegram, drafted by Kiderlen, the Chancellor replied that he could not recommend its acceptance. At this moment Tcharykov informed the Porte that, in consequence of instructions from

Sazonoff, the *démarche* concerning the Straits was to be regarded as "non avenu"; and Marschall accordingly withdrew his resignation.

Soon after the troublesome issue of the Straits had again been temporarily laid to rest, Italy's growing impatience at the stagnation of the war threatened a rift in the Triple Alliance.<sup>1</sup> In February, 1912, Jagow reported from Rome that she was planning to seize the Aegean isles, since a military decision in Africa was impossible. Austria stood in the way, but might not Germany help to remove the obstacle? Kiderlen replied that he had already urged Vienna to consider the feelings of Italy. When the Kaiser and Victor Emmanuel met at Venice in March, the King begged his visitor to secure the removal of Aehrenthal's veto, which endangered the Triple Alliance. The Kaiser promised his good offices, and, as a result of German pressure, Austria reluctantly consented to the temporary occupation of Rhodes and two other islands outside the Aegean.

The occupation of Rhodes, followed by a brief bombardment of the Dardanelles on April 18, brought peace no nearer and resulted in the temporary closing of the Straits. Further islands were occupied by Italy, this time within the Aegean, with a verbal promise to restore them when peace returned. Peace seemed in sight when representatives of the belligerents met at Lausanne in July, but Italy's refusal to admit even the shadow of suzerainty wrecked the discussions. After a year of war, in which little blood had been shed, both sides were ready to stop if an acceptable formula could be found. Yet it was not until the Balkan states sprang at the throat of their foe at the beginning of October that Turkey consented to sign the Treaty of Lausanne. Germany's relations with Italy had suffered little if at all from the long conflict. Indeed she profited by the friction between her ally and her neighbours. Austria had circumscribed the activities of the Italian fleet, and since the detention of French ships in the Western Mediterranean a cold wind had blown from Paris. When Kiderlen visited Rome at the opening of 1912 and the Kaiser journeyed to Venice at Easter, they found the King and his Ministers in gracious mood, eager to renew the Triple Alliance before the appointed date. It was fully realised in Rome that, so far as Tripoli was concerned, no difficulties would be made in Berlin. After long negotiations the fifth treaty of the Triple Alliance

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXX, ch. 238.

was signed on December 5, 1912, to come into force on the expiration of the fourth treaty in July 1914.<sup>1</sup>

## VI

The Tsar's visit to Potsdam in November 1910, which led to the Russo-German agreement of August 1911, had to be returned. When a meeting in Finnish waters was arranged for July 1912, the German Ambassador in St. Petersburg was instructed to draw up a memorandum for the Kaiser's guidance.<sup>2</sup> After the experience at Björkö the Tsar was in terror of being caught off his guard. In view of his suspicious character, wrote Pourtalès, any attempt to influence him in a particular direction should be avoided. Bethmann accompanied his master to Baltic Port, where the meeting passed off to the general satisfaction. After the first day he wired home indications for the attitude of the press. Both parties realised the value of such occasions and the importance of keeping continually in touch. After the second day an agreed *communiqué* announced that the meeting of the Emperors was particularly cordial and offered a fresh proof of their long-standing friendship. "There could be no question either of new agreements, for which there was no need, or of changes in the grouping of the European Powers, the value of which for the preservation of the Balance of Power and of peace has been proved. The meeting at Baltic Port can therefore be welcomed by all. For while on the one hand it testifies to the firm and lasting friendship between Germany and Russia, it is also an eloquent expression of the peaceful tendencies which govern the policy of both Empires in equal degree." The Kaiser's delight found expression in a telegram to Francis Joseph.

The Chancellor's detailed report was pitched throughout in the major key. Russia's first need, declared Kokovtsoff, was tranquillity, and she desired the earliest termination of the Tripoli war. Sazonoff was equally reassuring. Russia naturally sympathized with Italy more than with Turkey, but she had no intention of profiting by the latter's difficulties. Her traditional mission in the Balkan states had come to an end. Since the Potsdam interview suspicion had given way to confidence. If Russia and Germany were on good terms,

<sup>1</sup> Pribram, *The Secret Treaties of Austria-Hungary*, I, 244-59; II, 143-73.

<sup>2</sup> G.P. XXXI, ch. 247.

nothing could happen in the world. Such meetings should be held at least every two years. Bethmann responded with equal warmth. He was grateful for Russia's calming influence on France during the Morocco crisis. Germany had no desire to interfere with the concerns of the Entente Powers. Why should she not have friendly relations with them? How about Austria? inquired Sazonoff. Austria, replied Bethmann, had no aggressive plans in the Balkans and held fast to the *status quo*. "So it is still the same as at Potsdam—no encouragement of Austria?" Since Potsdam, replied the Chancellor, her attitude had not changed: Balkan adventures were not on her programme. Bethmann's conversations with the Tsar were equally satisfactory. The visit ended happily with the release of arrested spies in both countries. Had Sazonoff confessed that a Balkan League had recently been formed under his auspices, his visitors would have been less gratified.

Kiderlen's satisfaction was spoiled by the joint *communiqué* of the Foreign Ministers. The Triple Entente, he complained, had received a written testimonial that it pursued purely pacific aims. He had always looked down on his chief as an amateur in foreign affairs, and never more than now. Bethmann, who had gone to St. Petersburg, was unrepentant. His conversations with the Tsar and his Ministers convinced him that Russia, like Germany, desired to maintain the *status quo* in the Balkans. Vienna was to be informed that the meeting had been more cordial than any of its predecessors. "Here, too, Kokovtsoff, Sazonoff and all their colleagues are obviously anxious to strengthen, if that is possible, the encouraging impressions of Baltic Port."

The Chancellor's visit to St. Petersburg was a lasting memory. "My all too brief journey in Russia", he wrote to a friend after his return, "was full of fine and great impressions, and cured me of several prejudices which our frivolous press had planted even in me.<sup>1</sup> The wealth of the products of the soil and the physique of the population are factors which we, under the influence of our softening culture, need not indeed fear but should not underrate. The meeting of the two Emperors was thoroughly harmonious, and with Kokovtsoff and Sazonoff I believe myself to have established trustful and amicable relations. The ruling Russian statesmen desire above all tranquillity for Russia, and for that reason—not because

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXI, 449, note.

they are in love with us—the friendliest relations with us. Thus I regard the meeting without illusions. Three years ago the wire between Berlin and St. Petersburg was broken, and St. Petersburg was not anxious to mend it. Compared with that time it is a great advance.” Bethmann was full of his journey when Jules Cambon visited him at his home at Hohenfinow on July 27.<sup>1</sup> “He has come back deeply impressed by the latent strength of Russia, and convinced that there is in that country a reserve of political, industrial and economic power which greatly surpasses that of the old world. France and Germany were old nations. Russia was only at the dawn of her development. America was a new country inhabited by old races, while Russia was wholly young. He praised Sazonoff, but his chief admiration was reserved for Kokovtsoff. Russia was firmly attached to peace, and he had no doubt that Austria was equally pacific. The idea of a world war arising out of the situation in Turkey was horrible. “*Nous sommes, vous et nous*”, he concluded, “*les deux peuples qui ont la plus haute culture intellectuelle et c’est vraiment un devoir d’homme civilisé que d’éviter un conflit entre nous.*” Unaware of the storms that were brewing in the Balkans, the Chancellor went off for the summer holiday in good spirits.

## VII

On August 13, 1912, a month after the meeting at Baltic Port, Berchtold addressed a circular to the Powers which was designed to avert hostilities in the Near East.<sup>2</sup> Turkey, he suggested, should be encouraged to extend her Albanian concessions to other districts, and the Balkan states should be exhorted to give her time. Bethmann, who was taking the waters at Gastein, decided to visit him on his way home, and asked Kiderlen for advice. The Foreign Minister replied that the proposal was harmless enough, but the Chancellor should remonstrate against such unilateral action. “Our treaties and agreements do not pledge us to support Austria in her eastern plans, let alone her adventures, all the less since she has not promised us assistance against France. If we have recently on several occasions gone beyond our obligations, it was in order to strengthen our alliance. We must, however, decide our attitude towards her actions in Balkan matters from case to case. If such surprises continue, we might one day regret-

<sup>1</sup> *D.D.F.* III, 304-5.

<sup>2</sup> *G.P.* XXXIII, ch. 226.



fully have to say No. To avoid such an eventuality we must ask Austria to consult us before taking decisions, as we consult her. . . . We will not be her satellite in the Near East." When the Chancellor visited Buchlau, Berchtold explained that he had wished to consult Germany but feared that Russia might act first. It was a lame excuse, and Bethmann returned to Berlin sharing the conviction that in the approaching crisis Austria would have to be watched. His consolation was that, as he remarked to Jules Cambon on September 19, Russia did not desire war.<sup>1</sup>

The news of mobilisation by the Balkan states, wired the Chancellor to his master on October 1, might mean war or only armed pressure, though in the latter case public excitement might force the pace.<sup>2</sup> There was no reason for alarm, for every one was striving to locate the conflict. France and Russia were particularly zealous, and even England was ready to speak in Constantinople and the Balkan capitals. The business world, as usual, was in a flutter, but he was striving to calm its nerves. For instance he announced that the Kaiser was staying quietly at Rominten, and he himself proposed to keep a shooting engagement with the Prince Regent of Bavaria, rather for show than for the stags, and with the mental reservation to return in case of need "owing to bad weather." When the Foreign Office representative in attendance on the Kaiser reported fears for his master's safety at a residence so close to the Russian frontier, Bethmann replied in a telegram drafted by Kiderlen that the Great Powers were unlikely to intervene. There was not the slightest reason for the Kaiser to move, and the responsibility for his safety rested with the Chancellor.

When hostilities began with Montenegro's declaration of war on October 8, the optimism of the Wilhelmstrasse seemed to be justified. Alarmed at the result of the Balkan Pact Sazonoff tried to put on the brakes, and Berchtold held his hand. The Kaiser's sympathy with Turkey had cooled, and the military prowess of the allies prompted him to declare that no obstacles should be placed in their way. Poincaré's efforts to localise the struggle were unremitting, and Grey's desire to avoid complications was never in doubt. By his cool and conciliatory handling of the situation Kiderlen regained part of the confidence which he had forfeited at Agadir. The first month of the war, in fact, was far the least anxious chapter of a long story.

<sup>1</sup> *D.D.F.* III, 525-6.

<sup>2</sup> *G.P.* XXXIII, ch. 263, p. 142.

The sensational victories of the allies rendered major territorial changes inevitable and raised questions in which the Great Powers, above all Austria and Russia, were deeply concerned. On November 9, after a conversation with Bethmann, the Kaiser telegraphed to the Foreign Office that under no circumstances would he march against Paris and Moscow for the sake of Albania or Durazzo.<sup>1</sup> Albania, he suggested, should become an independent state under a Servian prince, connected by treaty with Servia or the four Balkan allies, who might use its harbours. When the plan was shown to be unpracticable he grudgingly consented to stand by his allies, both of whom, though with different degrees of intensity, opposed the advance of the Serbs to the sea. A remarkable Memorandum in his own hand summarised his conversation with the Chancellor and Foreign Minister, and may be taken as an indication of German policy in 1912. Austria had unwisely adopted a dictatorial tone in regard to Servian claims, which might lead to complications. She opposed a Servian advance to the sea, which Russia seemed likely to support. Austria and Russia might go to war, and, if the latter attacked, Germany was obliged by treaty to intervene. That meant war on two fronts, for Paris would have to be taken before the march to the East could begin and London would doubtless support Paris. Thus Germany would enter on a war of existence with three Great Powers, in which she might be beaten, simply because Austria would not allow the Serbs in Albania or Durazzo. No one with a conscience would risk her existence for such a cause. The *casus foederis* emerged only if Austria did not provoke Russia to war. Bethmann shared his master's determination not to give Austria *carte blanche*. When the Archduke Franz Ferdinand visited Berlin on November 23 he was plainly told that Germany would not fight about a Servian port. On parting with his guest at the station the Kaiser cried impulsively: Above all, no follies! In reporting the incident the Belgian Minister added that the Emperor, the Chancellor and the Foreign Secretary were beyond doubt passionately for peace.

The attitude of the Government was authoritatively explained to the Reichstag by the Foreign Secretary on November 28.<sup>2</sup> Germany had long endeavoured to keep Turkey intact, for she had large economic interests in that country, but she had never assumed political obligations. The wisdom of this

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIII, 302-4.

<sup>2</sup> Jäckh, *Kiderlen-Waechter*, II, 193-8.

policy was proved during the Tripoli war, during which she retained the sympathies of both belligerents. Everyone had known for years that Turkey's European provinces would ultimately be divided among the Balkan states. Germany's aim had been to postpone this consummation as long as possible, to minimise the disturbance when it came, and above all to avert a conflict of the Great Powers. King Ferdinand had been exhorted to go slow. Unfortunately the errors of the Young Turks and the impatience of the Balkan states had caused an explosion which, he hoped and believed, would not provoke a European war. The principal difficulty was the Servian desire for a port on the Adriatic and Russia's approval of the claim. Austria had borne Servian provocations with admirable patience. Germany was only indirectly interested in the Balkan crisis, but for her allies vital interests were at stake. If, in the process of securing them and of maintaining their position as Great Powers in face of Slav pretensions, they were attacked by Russia, Germany in her own interest would discharge her treaty obligations to the full. "It has often been said that Germany does not need to fight for the Albanian or Adriatic interests of Austria or for the harbour of Durazzo. But that is not the point. . . . If Austria, whatever the reason, is forced to fight for her position as a Great Power, we must stand at her side in order that we do not afterwards have to fight alone. This has not hindered and will not hinder us in using the whole of our influence to smooth out antagonisms. The limit is that we cannot press our ally to accept humiliation."

Four days later, on December 2, the Chancellor reaffirmed Kiderlen's declarations of Germany's pacific aims and her loyalty to her allies in a short but pregnant speech which echoed ominously across Europe and must be read as a forecast of his attitude in 1914.<sup>1</sup> The German Government had striven to localise the conflict, and he quite hoped that its efforts would continue to succeed. They were not directly concerned in events in the Balkans, in many respects less so than the other Powers. But they were justified in taking their share in shaping the new arrangements, for they were vitally interested in economic developments. Moreover they would have their say in support of their allies in the settlement of many questions. The belligerents recognised that the Great Powers would take part in the final determination of frontiers. An exchange of ideas had taken place in an accommodating

<sup>1</sup> Schulthess, *Europäischer Geschichtskalender*, 1912, 243-4.

spirit, and there was every prospect of success. The precise claims would only be decided and announced when the arrangements between the belligerents were known. Then it would be possible to see how far they impinged on the sphere of interest of other Powers. If—which he hoped would not be the case—irreconcilable differences emerged, it would be the task of the directly interested Powers to make their will prevail. That was also the case with their allies. “If, however, in this process of securing their interests they, contrary to all expectation, are attacked from a third side and thereby threatened in their existence, we, true to our duty as an ally, would have to stand resolutely at their side. And then we should fight for the preservation of our own position in Europe, for the defence of our own future and safety. I am firmly convinced that for such a policy we should have the whole people behind us.”

Berchtold was delighted, observing that the firm words would clarify the situation and strengthen the chances of peace. The Entente capitals, on the other hand, were alarmed at what seemed to be the rattling of the sword. Nicolson confided to Paul Cambon his fear that the speech might frustrate Sazonoff's efforts to hold Russian opinion in check.<sup>1</sup> Lichnowsky admitted that it was a little sharp, and Grey complained that it seemed to contemplate a little prematurely the possibility of war.<sup>2</sup> The Chancellor had said that, if Germany fought, it would be for the defence of her own position and for the protection of her security. Other Powers could say the same. England had not done so, not wishing to anticipate the possibility of complications. Germany, interjected the Ambassador, had an alliance, and was therefore more closely tied. The Chancellor, retorted Grey, had spoken not only of the alliance but of what the interests of a country might require. He had probably thought, explained Lichnowsky, that a clear indication that Germany would stand by her alliance would tend towards peace as in 1909. If the situation of 1909 were reproduced, rejoined Grey, Russia would assuredly go to war. If the impression were created that Germany would support Austria in whatever the latter said her interests required, apart altogether from the merits of the case, this would not tend towards moderation. If Germany and England succeeded in preserving peace, the very best results would follow. If they failed no one could predict events. Bethmann's emphatic

<sup>1</sup> *D.D.F.* IV, 634-5.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T.* IX, part II, 243-7.

proclamation of solidarity with Austria, however well-intentioned as an essay in clarification, had set the nerves of Europe on edge.

The armistice of December 4 shifted the interest to London, where the belligerents wrangled over their claims and the Ambassadors' Conference began its useful career. Lichnowsky's instructions bade him consult his Austrian and Italian colleagues on all points before the meetings and co-ordinate their action. The Ambassadors, however, should not make proposals in the name of the Triple Alliance except when the other Powers came forward as the Triple Entente. In regard to the Adriatic question, German wishes should be presented, not as the rejection of Servian aspirations, but as in the interest of Albania. In regard to the frontier on the land side, which so far as possible should follow geographical and ethnic lines, the Ambassador should support the Austrian plan. Servia should enjoy entire political and economic independence, including a commercial outlet on the Adriatic with harbour and railway on agreed conditions. In the Aegean England's wishes should be awaited, but Italy's interest as the holder of certain islands in pledge should be kept in mind. Greece should not get the islands close to the Dardanelles and Asia Minor into her effective possession by military occupation or fortification, though autonomous rights might be granted to the inhabitants under a Greek Protectorate.

Despite their defeat the 'Turks' proposals were so preposterous that the Kaiser recommended Anglo-German co-operation to secure a compromise.<sup>1</sup> Bethmann accordingly sent instructions to Lichnowsky pointing out that a prolongation of the conflict would endanger Asia Minor; for the Russian Ambassador in Constantinople had declared that, if hostilities were resumed, Russia could not remain neutral. If she seized the opportunity of reaching her goal in Armenia, Asiatic Turkey might collapse and the unity of the Powers be threatened. England and Germany, who had no selfish aims in the Balkans, were the Powers to bring about peace by urging Turkey to moderate her terms. Such co-operation could also contribute to the improvement of Anglo-German relations. Grey appreciated the suggestion, but preferred a collective *démarche* at Constantinople, which Bethmann urged his master to accept. In the note presented on January 17, 1913, Turkey was urged to surrender Adrianople, and the Powers promised

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIV, ch. 267.

to consider her security in the disposition of the islands.

Bethmann was as anxious as Grey to localise the war, but he did not approve Lichnowsky's deference to Russia. Benckendorff, wired the Ambassador on January 19, had told him that Russia could yield no further.<sup>1</sup> Bluff or not, he was thoroughly alarmed. "Since October I have ventured to point out that, if we adopt all Austria's wishes and do not tell Vienna that we do not desire a world war on account of Servia and Albania, it may come." This cry of distress earned a reproof from Berlin. The Ambassador, wrote Bethmann, should have reminded Benckendorff that the shaping of the Balkans was a vital interest to Austria as a neighbour, unlike the purely sentimental interest which was all that Russia could claim. "Our policy", concluded the despatch, "will support Austrian wishes so far as seems necessary for the maintenance of our ally as a Great Power. That it may come into opposition to Russian policy is due to the fact that the latter aims at its diminution. Please keep these points continually in mind in the coming negotiations." Lichnowsky had never liked the Austro-German pact and would have preferred a Russian partnership in 1879.

The report of a conversation with Grey about Asia Minor prompted the Chancellor to clear his mind in a Memorandum dated January 25, two days after Enver's *coup* at Constantinople rendered the resumption of hostilities inevitable. "I gravely fear that England will submit to the pressure of Russia and France to prepare the way for a liquidation of Asia Minor. Lichnowsky's report sounds suspicious. If Sir Edward Grey does not at present desire to discuss spheres of interest, one day he will declare that circumstances are too strong for him and will confront us with a ready-made programme of the Triple Entente, followed by occupations and Protectorates. For Germany to travel along that road would be to weaken herself. But we must be clear where we want to go. However things shape for the moment, the liquidation of Asia Minor is inevitable, perhaps after a Continental war. Whether in such a case we ought still to say that we merely desire to look after our economic interests I am not sure. If not, we should at once give England a hint." These meditations were embodied in a despatch to Lichnowsky two days later. The partition of Asia Minor was the last thing that Germany desired. If, however, it occurred, she would be compelled to

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, ch. 268.

secure a share. It would be a question not merely of her investments but of her prestige. German sentiment could not allow territories which had been opened up to culture and commerce by German labour to pass into strange hands. He expressed similar views to the French Ambassador. Germany would have to play her part in discussing the fate of Asia Minor, but he hoped that no one would raise the question. "If war broke out in Europe, it would be a fearful disaster for every one except Japan and the United States, and posterity would treat us as madmen for not preventing it."

Lichnowsky was neither a great man nor a great Ambassador, but he thought for himself and, like Metternich, never hesitated to warn. In a private letter of January 26 he confessed that he saw scarcely any possibility of avoiding war. "Anglo-German relations, which are so important, have not been so friendly for years, but that would vanish from the moment we are at war with France." Russia, who did not desire war, would consent to small concessions if Austria did the same. After her experience in 1908 she could not give way again all along the line. "A very great deal depends on yourself. If you tell Szögenyi that under no circumstances will we have war, and that I shall be instructed, in co-operation with Grey, to find a solution, it would be an immense gain. To interpret the alliance as committing us to blind subservience, without even the right to express our opinion at such a critical moment, was certainly not in Bismarck's mind."

Taking no offence at this outspoken letter, the Chancellor replied that he entirely agreed with its ultimate aims. "I too am always working towards them, but perhaps more calmly than you. For that there is no need. The spectre of war, which is always before your eyes, is the creation of Benckendorff. I beg you not to take his observations too seriously. After Austria, with the help of ourselves and Italy, has won in the Adriatic question, Scutari and Djakova will not cause a break." To press Austria too hard would be a mistake. England, with whom co-operation must be carefully maintained, strove to prevent a crack in the Triple Entente, and similar care should be taken with the Triple Alliance. "Our task is clear: a compromise solution of the Scutari question in union with England, but without weakening our relations to Austria. I cannot over-emphasise the importance of the latter principle. I cannot conceal the fact that you are regarded by the whole diplomatic world as an opponent of Austria. . . . I am

always ready to consider different views. But in public I beg you to put aside your personal feelings, strictly to observe your instructions, and energetically to support the policy which, after consulting my official advisers, I regard as the best."

The second Balkan war was far less dramatic than the first, for the issue was no longer in doubt. On the other hand, as the time approached for a division of the spoils, the divergence between Austria and Russia developed, the former championing the claims of Albania, the latter backing the aspirations of her Serb and Montenegrin *protégés*. In his reply to a private letter from Berchtold explaining the purpose of the Hohenlohe Mission to St. Petersburg, Bethmann expressed hopes for its success, but added that even in that case the danger would not be over. For the weak-willed Tsar was liable to be stampeded by Panslav sentiment, which would certainly triumph if Austria attacked Servia. In such a case it would be almost impossible for Russia to remain a mere onlooker. The men of peace, Kokovtsoff and Sazonoff, would be swept aside. Russian intervention would involve a war between the Triple Alliance (with Italy's grudging support) and the Triple Entente, in which Germany would have to bear the brunt of the French and English attack. This perspective compelled him to ask for information as to the proposed course of Austrian policy. Whereas in the Bosnian crisis England urged Russia on and pursued a policy of prestige, to-day she was a mediating influence. The Entente policy had passed its peak, and a new English orientation might be hoped for if the existing crisis could be liquidated. Bethmann never wrote a more noteworthy letter. For, in addition to a solemn warning to Austria, he recognised in 1913 that an attack on Servia would almost inevitably bring Russia into the field, and that England would stand by her friends.

As the spring advanced the problem of Albania's frontiers brought Europe to the verge of war, and careful steering was needed. On April 8 Bethmann reported to the Kaiser on the situation created by the intransigence of Montenegro.<sup>1</sup> Germany, as usual, had been trying to hold the balance. Austria had been urged to avoid unilateral action, and Grey had been pressed to stir up the Conference. Germany disapproved the idea of buying off the opposition of King Nicholas, which would only stimulate the appetite of other Balkan states. "In accordance with His Majesty's directions we have stood

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIV, 640-2.



loyally at the side of our Austrian ally throughout the crisis. Austria's interest forbade a Slav advance to the Adriatic. . . . It is owing chiefly to our support that this has been prevented, and Servia's Adriatic efforts limited to the use of a commercial harbour. . . . The Albanian buffer state is Austria's only gain from the shipwreck of her Balkan aspirations. If even this modest advantage slips from her grasp at the eleventh hour, her policy would suffer a bankruptcy which would shatter her international status and gravely imperil her national cohesion. To avert the weakening of Germany through the humiliation of Austria is our chief task at this moment. The prospect of performing it peacefully increases with the resolution and strength of our association with our ally." Here was the unchanging policy of Berlin throughout the Balkan struggles of 1912-13—to localise the conflict, to co-operate with England in mediatory activities, tactfully to counsel caution in Vienna, and to keep the Triple Alliance in repair.

Long before peace was signed in London on May 30, 1913, the Allies had begun to quarrel over the spoils, and a month later Bulgaria's attack on Servia and Greece inaugurated the third Balkan war. The result depended in the main on the attitude of Roumania. Here for the first time during the Balkan troubles the policies of Berlin and Vienna seriously diverged. Austria saw in Bulgaria the only bulwark against the flowing Serbo-Russian tide, while Germany envisaged her aggrandisement as a threat to the security of Roumania and Greece. Roumania's deepening alienation from Austria and her growing intimacy with Russia were watched by the Ballplatz with alarm, while Bulgaria's rejection of Russian advice in her dispute with Servia left her no choice but to turn towards Vienna. Both sides had good arguments, and neither succeeded in converting the other.

When Berchtold invited his ally to dissuade Roumania from joining Bulgaria's foes, the Chancellor declined.<sup>1</sup> Austria, he observed to Szögenyi, should urge Bulgaria to cede the territory demanded by her neighbour. By thus securing her flank, she could throw her whole strength against Servia and Greece. It was to the interest of the Triple Alliance that Roumania should remain in its orbit. "If we let her go, we drive her into the arms of Russia for the chimaera of Bulgaria's friendship." Austria had succeeded in her two main aims of holding back Servia from the Adriatic and creating a healthy

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXV, 128-30.

Albania. She could be glad if Bulgaria and Servia at the end of the war were weak and estranged. She would thus have time to bring about the indispensable *modus vivendi* with Belgrad. Even if Servia won, it was still a far cry to Greater Servia. If Austria tried to eject her from the newly won territories by diplomatic means, she would fail and would fill her with deadly resentment. If force were applied, a European war would result. "Germany's vital interests would then be most deeply involved, and therefore I must expect Count Berchtold to inform us before he makes such resolutions. I can only express the hope that Vienna will not alarm itself with the nightmare of a Greater Servia, but await developments on the Bulgar-Serb battlefields. I must strongly advise against the idea of gobbling up Servia, which would only weaken the Monarchy." This was plain speaking, such as Bülow had never used to Aehrenthal and such as Berchtold had never heard. Henceforth Austria could merely watch the struggle in which her Bulgarian *protégé*, after rashly challenging her late allies, found herself confronted with Roumania and Turkey as well. Such an unequal contest could have only one end. The Treaty of Bucharest was envisaged in Berlin mainly as a Roumanian triumph, in Vienna mainly as a Bulgarian defeat. Austria's policy had succeeded in the first two Balkan wars, when it received support from her allies. It failed in the third, when Germany ostentatiously rejected the appeal to rescue Bulgaria from the consequences of her mistakes.

### VIII

A quiet autumn followed the Balkan conflict, for the belligerents needed time to recover. The only excitement was Austria's October ultimatum, demanding the evacuation of Albania by Servian troops within eight days. The decision was taken without consulting her allies; but when Germany was informed, three days before the thunderbolt was launched, a promise of support was promptly despatched.<sup>1</sup> Berchtold sent a warm message of thanks. Germany's firm attitude, he added, which he had never doubted, confirmed his belief that the Serbs would not fight. Servia promptly gave way, but the explosion was only postponed. Though the world was unaware of the change, the Kaiser had abandoned the cautious attitude which had helped to localise the Balkan wars. In

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXVI, 386-8, 398.

conversation with Conrad at the unveiling of the monument to the battle of Leipzig, he encouraged Austria to invade Serbia, and expressed his belief that the other Powers would not intervene.<sup>1</sup> A longer conversation with Berchtold at Vienna reiterated his view that the time had come for Austria to remove the Servian menace, and he promised unflinching support in the event of complications.<sup>2</sup> He had travelled far since the previous autumn, when the attitude of Vienna seemed to him needlessly stiff. German policy, however, except in regard to the fleet, was not shaped by the Kaiser. In describing his visit, Conrad noted that the Chancellor did not share his master's conversion. Bethmann was resolved to fulfil treaty obligations and to maintain Austria's position as a Great Power, but he had no taste for adventures.

Turkey's defeat turned her eyes towards Berlin, where the art of war was believed to be best understood. In April, 1913, the Grand Vizier asked the Kaiser, directly the conflict was over, to send a Prussian officer to re-fortify Constantinople.<sup>3</sup> The request was approved and the Foreign Office raised no objection. Turkey, declared Shefkhet to the German Ambassador, needed at least ten years of peace for the purposes of re-organisation. Germany and England must help, the former with the army, the latter with the fleet. A month later he pleaded for a prominent German General. The German Ambassador, in supporting the request, pointed out that, if rebuffed at Berlin, the Turks would look elsewhere. The choice of General Liman von Sanders was announced to the Chancellor on June 30, but his powers were not defined till September. The appointment was for five years, and he was to be a member of the Supreme War Council.

The first note of alarm was sounded by Neratoff, Assistant Foreign Minister, on November 7. A large number of high German officers, he heard, were about to enter the service of Turkey in order to reorganise the army, and particularly the garrison of Constantinople. If the information was confirmed it would be sharply resented. Turkey, wired the Wilhelmstrasse in reply, had asked for a military mission: if Germany had refused, she would look elsewhere. It was for the Turks to decide where it should work. Russia's anxieties were incomprehensible. Neratoff could hardly believe that Turkey

<sup>1</sup> Conrad, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit*, III, 469-70.

<sup>2</sup> *A.* VII, 512-5.

<sup>3</sup> *G.P.* XXXVIII, ch. 290; *G. and T.* X, part I, ch. 87.

would attack Russia. She would be happy if her Balkan neighbours left her alone, and all the Powers had an interest in maintaining her diminished territories. A week later Sazonoff, returning from Livadia, added his protest. Why had they not talked to him about it in Berlin? It was not a military but a political affair: the Young Turks were capable of anything. Let the German officers work in the provinces!

On November 18 Kokovtsoff, at the wish of Sazonoff, discussed the Mission with the Chancellor at Berlin. The Foreign Minister, he declared, was alarmed that a German General should command an army corps in Constantinople. The Turks, replied Bethmann, had applied in the early summer for a military Mission, and he, seeing no political objection, had approved. Since then the affair had been in military hands, and for that reason it had not been in his mind when Sazonoff was in Berlin. For decades there had been German instructors of the Turkish army. To have declined would have been a reversal of policy. In view of her large economic interests it was very important for Germany that Turkey should remain intact. In the event of refusal she would have procured help elsewhere, perhaps in France. That Russia could take offence had never entered his head. The war had shown Turkey's incapacity for aggression, and the idea of her attacking Russia was nonsense. That the Mission would be stationed in the capital was no novelty. General von der Goltz had spent twelve years there reorganising the whole army. Surely Russia realised that he desired to establish and maintain the friendliest and most trustful relations. Was he likely to counterwork his own policy? Moreover the whole Turkish fleet was under an English Admiral, the gendarmerie under a French General. After listening to this vigorous defence, Kokovtsoff expressed regret that the matter had not been discussed with Sazonoff and promptly cleared up. Turkey, he agreed, was incapable of a single-handed attack on Russia. If she joined other Powers it might be different. Kokovtsoff, concluded Bethmann's report, realised that Germany had had no alternative.

On the following day the Russian statesman described to the Chancellor his interview with the Kaiser, who explained that the choice of Constantinople was made by the Turks. Command of the corps, he had added, was necessary, since, as experience proved, inspection was not enough to restore discipline. Kokovtsoff had suggested the removal of the

command to Adrianople, which the Kaiser promised to consider. To Bethmann he proposed two alternatives—a modified command in Constantinople, or, preferably, full command in Adrianople. The Chancellor declared the latter impracticable. If the reforms were to be effective, Constantinople was the place. At this moment, on November 27, Liman's contract with the Turkish Government was signed. The Chief of the Military Mission was also to be Commander of the First Army Corps. On the same day Bethmann wrote to Kokovtsoff that economic activities in Turkey presupposed the recovery of the State. Not wishing to make it a political issue, he had left details to the soldiers. The English Admiral entrusted with the reorganisation of the Turkish fleet possessed far greater powers. Liman's duties necessitated personal contact with the central authorities and with the military training schools in Constantinople. He would be instructed to consider the practicability of another city, but the Chancellor had little hope. "These explanations, my honoured friend, will show once again how anxious I am to discuss the question openly and loyally with you." On receiving the letter, Kokovtsoff expressed to the German Chargé his entire confidence in the writer. Sazonoff, on the contrary, argued that the command of an army corps in the capital would make Liman master of the situation. Russia, and probably her partners in the Triple Entente, would demand compensation, and the partition of Turkey would begin. Unable to alter the decision of Berlin, the Ambassadors of the Triple Entente asked the Turkish Foreign Minister on December 13 for information about the General's powers, but asked in vain.

The question of Liman's powers had become a European issue, the prestige of Germany, Turkey and Russia being equally involved. Germany declared her readiness to meet Russia's wishes so far as military considerations allowed. Sazonoff was grateful for the message, but no way out of the *impasse* appeared. On the last day of the year Bethmann recommended to his master a suggestion of the German Ambassador in Constantinople, by which Liman should acquaint himself with the needs of a single corps and then take over the reorganisation of the whole army with an advance in rank. In this way the prestige of the Mission would be raised, and the appearance of surrender on the part of Turks or Germans would be avoided. The Kaiser approved, and Enver, the new Minister of War, acquiesced. A telegram

from Bethmann to the German Ambassador in St. Petersburg on January 15, 1914, announced the promotion of Liman to the rank of Cavalry General. Turkey would thereupon make him a Marshal, which would automatically terminate his command of a corps. Sazonoff still grumbled, asking gloomily what the Mission would do in the event of war, but Kokovstoff expressed satisfaction and gratitude.

The solution of the crisis was followed, not by the expected *détente*, but by an ominous press war.<sup>1</sup> The recovery of Russia's military strength after the disasters of the Japanese conflict was aided by the improvement of the national finances, and on February 24, 1914, Moltke, the Chief of the Staff, declared that her readiness for war was greater than ever. Germany was genuinely alarmed. "Russia's growing might arouses the gravest apprehensions," reported the Russian Ambassador in Berlin.<sup>2</sup> "In 1916, it is here believed, our siege artillery will be ready, and then Russia will become the terrible rival with whom Germany will find it very difficult to cope. Thus it is not surprising that Germany is striving with all her strength to be ready in the event of a conflict with us. Naturally she tries to frighten us and to give no sign that she fears Russia. Yet in my opinion this fear peeps out of every line of recent articles on Russo-German relations." The expiry of the commercial treaty in 1917 was a further source of anxiety. The Government, however, did not share the views of the German jingoes. When Pourtalès informally complained that Germany's moderation in the Balkan wars and her complaisance in the affair of the Liman Mission had met with so little reward, Sazonoff replied that the Nationalists had not the slightest influence over the Government. The assurance brought little comfort to the Ambassador, who described the Foreign Minister as tired and weak in health, adding that he was not so indifferent to press attacks as he pretended. On reading the report the Kaiser minuted: "Russo-Prussian relations are dead, once for all. We have become enemies."

The smouldering embers leapt into a flame when the *Kölnische Zeitung*, in its issue of March 2, published an article from its Correspondent in St. Petersburg entitled "Russia and Germany." Russia, he declared, was not yet ready for war, but she would be in the autumn of 1917. The whole utterance breathed the conviction that she would attack Germany when

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIX, ch. 299.

<sup>2</sup> *Imperialismus*, I, 435-7, March 12 and II, 202-3, April 9.

she was prepared. In view of the traditional intimacy of the paper with the Wilhelmstrasse and of the assumption that the author was in touch with the German Embassy, a panic occurred on the St. Petersburg Bourse. That Russia was consciously working towards a war the Ambassador declined to believe: the peril lay rather in the chapter of accidents. The leading personages, above all the Tsar himself, were so weak that any day might bring a surprise. Pourtalès explained to Sazonoff that the article was purely unofficial, and the Minister declared that no Russian seriously thought of attacking Germany. He was in friendly mood, but Sukhomlinoff, the Minister of War, inspired a reply describing the immense improvement in the army, adding that it could only displease states with aggressive aims.

The article was regretted in Berlin; but when Germany alone was blamed in England for the press feud, Bethmann reminded Lichnowsky that there was another side to the question. The offending utterance resulted from the long and unscrupulous campaign against Germany in the Russian papers, culminating in the comments on the Liman Mission. The *Times* actually declared that the attitude of Russia had been free from provocation. During the Agadir crisis Metternich had reproached Grey with having two pairs of scales, one for Germany, the other for France. "Anglo-German relations will only rest on an assured foundation when both the Government and public opinion cease to weigh us and their friends in the Entente with different measures." Such impartiality was impossible in any part of Europe, and on May 14 Jagow, speaking in the Reichstag, gravely warned the Russian press to mend its ways.

It was a symptom of the European anarchy that every crisis accelerated the armament race. Agadir generated the *Novelle*, and the Balkan wars stirred France and Germany to fresh military efforts. Encouraged by the Kaiser's desire to utilise the flowing tide, the service ministers produced plans of a magnitude not at all to the Chancellor's taste. At first blush, he remarked, they seemed quite impracticable, though he must reserve a formal reply. He begged them not to commit themselves to the Kaiser behind his back, and to keep their preliminary schemes secret. Under no circumstances would he allow press propaganda for their plans. These words, taken from his own report of the conversations, reveal intense annoyance, and suggest an assertion of civilian control which

his weak character was hardly fitted to sustain. The far-reaching ideas of the General Staff were set forth in Ludendorff's historic Memorandum of December, 1912. On January 5, 1913, the Chancellor formally proposed to his master a large increase of the army in the spring on condition that no Navy Bill should be introduced and that the worst of the Balkan crisis should be over. The Kaiser approved both the plan and its conditions. Tirpitz had argued that, if there was to be an Army Bill, it must be accompanied by naval expansion. The Admiral got his way in 1912: in 1913 he was overruled.

From the opening of the year the German press was full of the coming bill, which was announced by the Kaiser in a speech of February 5. A month later the details were made known, including an increase of over a hundred thousand men and the expenditure of a milliard to be raised by a capital levy. The first result in France was the decision to restore the Three Years' Service. The French Foreign Minister assured the German Ambassador that the Government did not regard the increase of the German army as a *geste provocatoire*, and had firm confidence in Germany's love of peace. The French plans, he added, were not a reply to Germany's measures. Similar words were used by Poincaré, the newly elected President of the Republic, on a formal visit to the German Embassy, the first in the history of the Third Republic. Despite these declarations and courtesies the French press revealed how deeply the nation was disturbed. Neither Government nor people, reported Schoen, entertained aggressive plans, yet the nationalists had been busy and memories of Agadir were fresh. Public opinion was an open powder-barrel into which at any moment a spark or a mischief-maker's match might fall. The Pan-Germans, he added, supplied the French with arguments for their apprehensions.

At this moment two incidents occurred to intensify the anxieties of France.<sup>1</sup> On April 3 a Zeppelin, carrying German officers in uniform, was forced down by motor trouble at Lunéville, but was allowed to recross the frontier. Espionage was suspected, though without reason; the behaviour of the French officials was correct but chilly, and the inhabitants took no trouble to conceal their hostility. A few days later some German business men on a visit to Nancy were molested by students, whom the excitable Kaiser compared to Red

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIX, 281-303.



Indians or Hottentots. When formal protest was made at Paris, the conciliatory Pichon expressed his regret, and the compromised officials were removed. The two affairs, though trifles in themselves, revealed the chronic Germanophobia of the frontier districts.

On April 7 the Chancellor introduced the new Army Bill in a memorable speech which surveyed the European situation as a whole.<sup>1</sup> No one could know whether and when there would be a war; but if a European conflict occurred Germany would be in it, and then she would have to fight for her life. She must therefore be as strong as her numbers allowed. After thanking Grey in the warmest terms for his recent services to peace, Bethmann passed to the new situation created by the Balkan war. "If it should ever come to a European conflagration which sets the Slav against the German, it is a disadvantage for us that the position in the balance of forces hitherto occupied by European Turkey is now filled in part by Slav states. . . . I do not say this because I regard such a collision as inevitable." The most friendly relations existed with the Russian Government, and there were no direct antagonisms. Yet the Panslav currents had received a powerful stimulus from the victories of the Slav states. Moreover the gigantic Russian Empire was witnessing a most marvellous economic development, and a reorganisation of the army was in progress on a scale hitherto unknown.

Turning to Russia's ally the Chancellor drew a similar distinction between the Government and certain sections of the people. Germany stood in good relations with the former, which, he felt sure, desired peace. French national sentiment, on the other hand, had become more bellicose and in moments of excitement it might become dangerous. "The French nation, brave and apt at war, proud of fame and honour, patriotic and self-sacrificing as it is, does not as a whole, I believe, desire war. But for wide circles—not only the Chauvinists—the development foretold by Bismarck has occurred. They believe themselves to be equal to us if not superior, trusting in the alliance with Russia, perhaps also looking hopefully to England. That is the dangerous aspect of the strengthening of French national feeling." The most cheerful passage in a speech charged with anxiety was that in which the beginning of a return of confidence between Germany and England was announced. The Army Bill, he

<sup>1</sup> There is an almost verbatim report in *The Times*, April 8, 1913.

concluded, was presented, not because Germany wanted war, but because she wanted peace, and because, if war came, she wanted to win.

The speech had a mixed reception. The confrontation of *Slaventum* and *Germanentum* conjured up the vision of a desperate struggle on racial lines. In criticising other nations Bethmann made no reference to his own Pan-Germans, whose baneful activities were watched with apprehension by the Powers of the Triple Entente. Barthou, the French Premier, expressed satisfaction at the recognition of the pacific sentiments of the French Government and the people as a whole. Nationalist propaganda, he added, was much less active and extensive than the Chancellor imagined, and when the existing re-armament crisis was over it would quickly subside. Pichon, the Foreign Minister, spoke to the Ambassador in similar terms. The Chancellor, he declared, attached too much importance to French Chauvinism: the great majority of the people was absolutely peaceful. Bethmann expressed the hope that Chauvinism would diminish as they foretold. "The French statesmen will admit, however, that the Chauvinistic manifestations were too serious for me to ignore."

The enlargement of the German army was followed by the passage of the Three Years Bill into law in August. The centenary celebrations of the battle of Leipzig emphasised the intensity of German patriotism. Both nations seemed to be girding themselves for a conflict which neither of them desired. On his visit to Potsdam in November the King of the Belgians discovered with alarm that the Kaiser had come to believe in the inevitability of war, and the French Government was informed of the fact.<sup>1</sup>

A genuine reconciliation, as Schoen pointed out in a series of despatches, was impossible. "France", he wrote on November 13, "will always remain the matrix of a coalition directed against the Triple Alliance. Even when friendly words are exchanged across the Vosges, incidents, which the best intentions of the Government cannot prevent, will lash the surface of the waters into angry waves." The Zabern incident was sharply criticised in the French press; but the substitution of a Doumergue-Caillaux combination for the Barthou cabinet, which had carried the Three Years Law, gave hope of slightly calmer times. When the fiery Déroulède passed away in February 1914, Schoen commented that the old

<sup>1</sup> D.D.F. VIII, 653-5.

bellicose *Revanche* party was dead. "The wound of 1871 burns in every French heart ; but nobody is inclined to risk his bones or those of his sons for Alsace-Lorraine—unless a constellation appears to open up a good chance of success. That however becomes ever more improbable. The hope of reaching the goal by Russia's aid has vanished long ago. . . . The idea is steadily growing that France's salvation is to be sought in better relations with Germany." The initialling of an agreement relating to railways in Asia Minor on February 15 between French and German business groups was a good sign,<sup>1</sup> and the French elections in May, which shifted the balance in the Chamber still more to the Left, were watched with satisfaction in Berlin. Bethmann realised that France would not unleash a war. Yet she remained the ally of Russia, with whom Germany's relations were growing steadily worse.

## IX

When Lichnowsky started work in London at the end of 1912 he was cordially welcomed in official and unofficial circles.<sup>2</sup> After the long and austere reign of the bachelor Metternich, Society flocked to the hospitable mansion in Carlton House Terrace. His zeal for Anglo-German friendship was transparently sincere, yet not for a moment did he allow his wishes to obscure his vision. England, explained Haldane in a frank talk on December 3, was absolutely pacific ; but in a general European scrimmage, which might result from Austria marching into Serbia if the latter refused to leave the Adriatic, it was hardly probable that she would stand aside.<sup>3</sup> "A welcome clarification," commented the Kaiser, "on which we must found our policy. We must make military agreements with Bulgaria and Turkey, Roumania and Japan. Any available Power is good enough to help us. For Germany it is a question of life or death."

William II was so impressed by Haldane's warning that he telegraphed for the army and navy chiefs.<sup>4</sup> What he decided about defence measures Bethmann did not know, but he heard that the navy men were encouraged to go ahead in the press. He noted the influence of the Pangermans on his impression-

<sup>1</sup> D.D.F. IX, 385-6, 396-408.

<sup>2</sup> Lichnowsky's despatches and writings are collected in *Auf dem Wege zum Abgrund*.

<sup>3</sup> G.P. XXXIX, 119-25.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, 7-12.

able master, to whom he tendered advice in a telegram drafted by Kiderlen. The Ambassadors' Balkan discussions in London, he began, were promising. In view of the peaceful attitude of Austria and Italy, war could only arise from the intransigence of Servia spurred on by Russia or France. A war with Russia meant also a war with France. On the other hand it was doubtful whether England would take action if Russia or France appeared to be aggressors. Utterances like those of Haldane only indicated that she would subsequently intervene in favour of a defeated France, at first by diplomatic means. Germany should therefore avoid all provocation. "I therefore beg your Majesty to instruct the Services that preparations for future bills should be kept absolutely secret, and that not even the Federal Governments should be informed before a decision is reached." He went on to complain of the agitation for a new Navy Law. In the present situation he regarded it as wholly inopportune and directly dangerous, and begged leave to inform Tirpitz in this sense. The time for propaganda would come when plans were fixed. The telegram requested approval of his proposals and proposed an interview on the whole complex of questions on which the future of German policy turned.

The Imperial comments on this telegram suggest the difficulties which the pacific Chancellor had to meet. William II desired war as little as his chief adviser; but he always believed the worst of other nations and was therefore more prone to alarm. The intervention of England, he declared, was not doubtful but certain. France and Russia would never appear guilty of provocation, for the press would be bought. Haldane's warning showed that England would act at the outset of the conflict, not at a later stage. In her own eyes Germany might be wholly innocent of provocation and yet be represented as the aggressor. Russia was guilty of provocation at that moment by the retention of her reserves, by her armaments, and by her purchases. The press agitation in Germany for a new Navy Law was intelligible and praiseworthy. For the moment Bethmann's caution might be approved, but at a later stage fresh demands must be made. Though the Chancellor was thankful to have averted another Navy Bill, the Kaiser was a man of moods. A fortnight later he called for plans for quicker construction of battleships, but another talk with the Chancellor pulled him back.<sup>1</sup> In view

<sup>1</sup> Tirpitz, *Politische Dokumente*, 370-1.

of the large outlay on the army and in the interest of Anglo-German relations, the shipbuilding plan, which the Chancellor approved in principle, should wait till the following year.

On February 6, 1913, Tirpitz informed the Reichstag that a ratio of 10:16 in capital ships was acceptable. "It indicates that we have not intended to compete with England. It affords us such strength that it is difficult to attack us. More we do not need." On the following day Jagow, who had succeeded Kiderlen as Foreign Minister, spoke warmly of Anglo-German co-operation in Balkan affairs. He appealed to the Budget Committee to abstain from public discussion of naval strengths. Since the practical English people was getting used to the growth of German naval power, it was better to let sleeping dogs lie. The French and Russian Press saw in these speeches the possibility of an Anglo-German naval agreement with a political rapprochement to follow. Their apprehensions were unfounded, for no response came from London. Grey had been told of Lichnowsky's hope, on taking up his duties, that the question of naval expenditure would not be raised, and in any case he had had enough of such unprofitable discussions.

The next chapter was opened by Churchill's proposal to abstain from shipbuilding for a year. The naval holiday was regarded by Bethmann as impracticable, by the Kaiser as a tactical manœuvre. Churchill's tone in introducing the estimates in March 1913 was friendly enough, but the five new battleships in the programme told their own tale. Lichnowsky believed that amicable relations were possible, despite the naval question and the Triple Entente, if German policy was unaggressive, particularly in regard to France. His view was shared by Bethmann, whose chief negative aim was to prevent an addition to the fleet. Even of this he could not be sure, for Tirpitz was stronger than ever at Court. When on October 9 Churchill declared that the feeling of insecurity was much more damaging to trustful relations than the quiet conviction of one's own strength, the Kaiser broke out into rapturous comment. "Thus the British First Lord of the Admiralty fully recognises the German Navy Law, above all the risk paragraph! . . . A magnificent and well deserved triumph for Admiral Tirpitz. A new proof of my old thesis that only the stout defence of one's own interests impresses the Englishman and finally impels him to a rapprochement, never a so-called concession which he always interprets as a sign of

weakness. So I shall continue unflinchingly to carry out the Navy Law in every detail, despite all domestic opposition, and if necessary to enlarge it. England's approach is the result of my Imperial navy, not in spite of it. *Avis au lecteur!*" Unlike the Chancellor, the Kaiser never reconciled himself to the notion of permanent inferiority.

At the opening of 1914, in an interview in the *Daily Chronicle*, Lloyd George demanded a diminution of British naval expenditure. The French were naturally alarmed, but the excitement subsided as quickly as it arose, for the Chancellor of the Exchequer was overruled by his colleagues. In a speech at Manchester on February 3 Grey expressed his regret at our growing expenditure on armaments, adding that it could not be checked unless we knew that other Powers would follow suit. He and his colleagues had appealed in vain for mutual reduction, for many great countries of Europe resented such suggestions as an intrusion in their domestic affairs. Tirpitz took up the challenge. He dismissed the naval holiday as impracticable, but repeated his acceptance of a 16:10 ratio, adding that the existing standard was even more favourable to England. If an armaments agreement were really desired, it was for the superior Power to make positive proposals, which Germany would carefully examine. The British Government, replied Grey, had not made positive proposals because they had been told that they would be unwelcome. What then did Tirpitz mean?

Bethmann secured an interpretation from the Admiral, and begged his master to authorise a communication to the British Ambassador. The Kaiser was in no mood for compromise. He would discuss an 8:5 ratio in capital ships, but nothing else. The official reply handed to Goschen on February 10 combined the explanation of his speech furnished by Tirpitz and the Kaiser's acceptance of discussion within certain limits. Official suggestions for the limitation of armaments, for instance on the 10:16 basis, explained Tirpitz, had never reached the German Government. He did not regard the Churchill plan of a naval holiday as official, and it was also impracticable. If the British Government intended to make proposals for squadrons of battleships in the ratio 5:8, the German Government would examine them. They must however take care that other Great Powers should not forge ahead with too powerful armaments. The plan of a naval holiday was dropped, and no further proposals were made.

The success of the protracted Anglo-German negotiations in regard to the Portuguese colonies was most satisfactory, but the agreement was not destined to bear fruit.<sup>1</sup> In consideration for the feelings of Portugal Grey declined to publish the document unless it was accompanied by the so-called Treaty of Windsor; and the Wilhelmstrasse feared that the guarantee of Portuguese territory would be held in Germany to stultify the deal. The more complicated Baghdad railway negotiations were equally successful and equally barren, for no advance could be made till all states concerned were satisfied. The deadlock on the Portuguese colonies was a minor disappointment, for it dealt with a hypothetical future. But the rumour of Anglo-Russian naval discussions which began after King George's visit to Paris threatened to cut the ground from under the Chancellor's feet. How could he resist fresh demands by the navalists if it became known that British and Russian officers were in consultation? A cry of alarm was raised in the *Berliner Tageblatt* on May 23 in the guise of a letter from Paris; and the article, as the editor has revealed, was inspired by the Foreign Office.<sup>2</sup>

In a despatch to Lichnowsky of June 16, 1914, drafted by himself, Bethmann discoursed on the state of Europe, taking as his text a chauvinistic article ascribed to the Russian War Minister.<sup>3</sup> Till now only the Pan-Germans and extreme militarists believed Russia to be planning an attack, but cooler heads were beginning to share the belief. The first result would be the cry for an immediate and considerable increase of the army, and the navy would follow suit. Since the Kaiser had already adopted such ideas, he feared an attack of the new armament fever in the summer and autumn. Though he could not be sure of the real aims of Russia, and though she was probably the most inclined of the Great Powers to go to war, he did not believe that she was planning an attack on Germany in the near future. She naturally desired, in the event of a new Balkan crisis, to be able to take a stronger line than before. Whether there would be a European conflagration would depend entirely on Germany and England. If they stood together as guardians of the peace of Europe in accordance with a common plan, war would not occur. Otherwise

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXVII, chs. 284-6; G. and T. X, part II; Helfferich, *Die Vorgeschichte des Weltkrieges*, 115-54; Rosen, *Aus einem diplomatischen Wanderleben*, II, 116-64.

<sup>2</sup> G.P. XXXIX, ch. 300; Theodor Wolff, *The Eve of 1914*, 379-86.

<sup>3</sup> G.P. XXXIX, 628-32.

some quite secondary difference between Russia and Austria might start the conflagration. Fresh activities on the part of German Chauvinists and armament fanatics would militate against such co-operation no less than the secret encouragement of French and Russian chauvinism by the English Cabinet. Germany would never consent to renounce the increase of her army as her numbers grew. There was no idea of enlarging the Navy Law, though within its limits naval strength could be increased.

The despatch concluded with a reference to the rumoured Anglo-Russian naval convention. That Grey had denied its truth was most satisfactory. "If these rumours had proved correct, even if the English and Russian navies merely agreed to co-operate if England and Russia were to fight against Germany in a future war (like England's arrangements with France during the Morocco crisis), not only would Russian and French chauvinism be greatly stimulated, but it would have led to a not unnatural disquietude of German opinion, which would have found expression in a navy scare and a renewed poisoning of our gradually improving relations with England. In view of the nerve strain from which Europe has suffered in recent years, the ultimate consequences would have been incalculable. At any rate the idea of a co-operative pacificatory mission in case of complications would have been gravely imperilled." Grey listened with satisfaction to the communication of these reflections. There were no unpublished agreements with the Entente Powers, he assured Lichnowsky, and he would never do anything to give the group a point against Germany; but his relations to France and Russia were very intimate, and he was in constant touch with them in all major questions. Lichnowsky only became aware that Anglo-Russian naval discussions were taking place when he visited Berlin a few days later.

## X

The Kaiser's first instinct on hearing the news of the Serajevo murders was to hurry to Vienna, but he was dissuaded by Bethmann on the ground of danger to life.<sup>1</sup> To a telegram regretting inability to express his sympathy in person

<sup>1</sup> *Die deutschen Dokumente zum Kriegsausbruch*, ed. Kautsky, are supplemented by Dirr, *Bayerische Dokumente*, and Bach, *Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte zum Kriegsausbruch*. The fullest account from the German side is by Hermann Lutz, *Die Europäische Politik in der Julikrise, 1914*, published in 1930.



Francis Joseph replied in an autograph letter which was brought by Count Hoyos to Berlin on July 5, together with a Foreign Office Memorandum setting forth the case for action against Servia and advocating an alliance with Bulgaria. He had expected strong action, remarked the Kaiser, but as European complications had to be considered he could give no formal answer till he had consulted the Chancellor. After lunch he authorised the Ambassador to inform his master that he could rely on Germany's full support.<sup>1</sup> As he had said, he must first ascertain the Chancellor's view, but he felt certain that the latter would agree. Even if it came to war between Austria and Russia, the former could be sure that Germany with her usual loyalty would stand at her side. Russia, however, was by no means ready and would think twice before appealing to arms. He realised how hard it would be for the peace-loving Emperor to march into Servia, but, if it were deemed necessary, he would regret the loss of a favourable opportunity. Later in the afternoon he received the Chancellor and the Under-Secretary Zimmermann, as Jagow was on leave. The preservation of Austria, he declared, was a vital interest of Germany. It was not their task to advise a course of action, but Francis Joseph should be assured that Germany would stand at Austria's side. Bethmann expressed his assent.

On the following day the Austrian Ambassador conversed with the Chancellor and Zimmermann.<sup>2</sup> His master, began Bethmann, had instructed him to express gratitude for the autograph letter. The German Government recognised the dangers arising from Russia's plans of a Balkan League. They also understood why Austria desired the adhesion of Bulgaria to the Triple Alliance, though they hoped that it would not weaken the obligations to Roumania. The German Minister in Sofia would, if desired, negotiate with the Bulgarian Government. King Carol would be informed of the negotiations in Sofia, and would be urged to suppress the Austrophobe agitation in his country. As regards Austria's relations with Servia, it was for her to decide what must be done. Whatever her decision, she could be sure that Germany would stand at her side as ally and friend. The Chancellor, like his master, reported Szogenyi, regarded immediate action as the best solution of Austria's difficulties in the Balkans, and from an international standpoint he considered the present moment

<sup>1</sup> A. VIII, 306-7, 319-20.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

more favourable than later. He approved the concealment of the plan from Italy and Roumania. On the other hand Italy should be informed of the intention of her allies to bring Bulgaria into the Triple Alliance. Thus, though neither Kaiser nor Chancellor had the slightest desire for a European war, they encouraged Austria to go ahead.

As Bethmann explains in his apologia, if Austria collapsed or changed sides, exasperated by being left in the lurch on a vital issue, Germany would find herself alone. That they should reject the appeal was indeed unthinkable. The mistake was to give Berchtold a free hand. Vienna, he declares, would have disliked interference, and diplomatic co-operation would have prevented Germany playing her mediator's part. He denies having given a blank cheque, since he asked to be kept informed and learned the outlines of the coming demands through his Ambassador. Yet he confesses that he considered the ultimatum too sharp, and it was precisely on the contents of that document that the destiny of the world was to turn. Jagow equally denies that Austria was given *carte blanche*; but he too was surprised by the sharp tone, and complained when the Austrian Ambassador declared that it was too late to change.<sup>1</sup> Whatever the intention of Berlin, Berchtold believed he was given a free hand and went his way.

The official reply of William II to the autograph letter was despatched to Vienna on July 17. He confirmed the oral promise of support, and added that he would not discuss the differences with Servia. "But I regard it not only as a moral duty of all civilised states but as a necessity of self-preservation to counterwork by every available weapon the propaganda of violence directed principally against the solid structure of monarchies. I do not overlook the grave danger to your dominions and ultimately to the Triple Alliance of Russian and Panslav agitation, and I recognise the necessity of freeing your southern frontiers from their heavy pressure. I am therefore prepared to support the endeavour of your Government to prevent the creation of a new anti-Austrian Balkan League under Russian patronage, and, as a counterweight, to bring Bulgaria into the Triple Alliance." Once again no conditions were made and no desire for consultation was expressed.

Having encouraged his partner to light the fuse, Bethmann did his best to avert an explosion. A letter of July 16 to the Secretary of State for Alsace-Lorraine suggests either that he

<sup>1</sup> Jagow, *Ursachen und Ausbruch des Weltkrieges*, 110.

was not yet seriously alarmed or that he concealed his anxiety. The European situation, he began, was not free from danger. In the event of an Austro-Serb conflict the first task was to keep the ring. There was reason to assume that France, beset by so many cares, would do her utmost to hold Russia back. This would be easier if the French nationalists were not supplied with fresh material for agitation. He had therefore forbidden press polemics in the coming weeks, and he desired the same veto to be imposed in the Rhine provinces. More dangerous to peace than the German press was the high-spirited young man on the steps of the throne, and Bethmann complained to the Kaiser of his inflammatory utterances. "I have ventured in a long letter to beg His Royal Highness to refrain from such manifestations, which, drafted without knowledge of the immediate situation and the diplomatic exchanges, are merely calculated to compromise and frustrate the policy of Your Majesty. I have emphasised the critical nature of the situation. I am not at all sure that he will listen to my appeal. On the contrary I fear that, when the Austrian ultimatum to Servia becomes known, he may wish to come out with declarations which our antagonists will regard as bellicose, whereas it is our task to localise the Austro-Serb conflict. Its solution is already so difficult that even trifles may turn the scale." He begged his master to forbid the Prince every kind of political demonstration. The Kaiser promptly complied in a sharp telegram, which brought a submissive reply.

When the Austrian torpedo was about to be launched the Chancellor sent a circular despatch dated July 21 to the Ambassadors in St. Petersburg, Paris and London, recalling Pan-Serb provocations and Austria's magnanimity. She could no longer watch unmoved the threats to her security and integrity. Her demands, though fair and moderate, might have to be enforced. The Ambassadors were instructed to explain the German view that it was a question solely affecting Austria and Servia. "We ardently desire the localisation of the conflict, since, in view of the various alliances, any intervention by another Power would involve unpredictable consequences." A special message accompanied the despatch to St. Petersburg. "You will also call the attention of Sazonoff to the grave consequences to the monarchical idea if the monarchical Powers, putting aside their national sympathies and political points of view, do not stand squarely at the side of Austria. For the political radicalism which rules

in Servia, and which does not stop short of crimes against its own royal family, must be crushed. In this task Russia is as much interested as Germany."

The Austrian ultimatum was communicated to Berlin so late that it would have been difficult to modify its terms, even had there been a desire to do so. On July 23, the day of its delivery at Belgrad, Bethmann telegraphed to his master in fairly hopeful mood. Germany's attitude for the present was that it was an Austro-Serb dispute, and only the intervention of another Power would bring her in. That this would at once occur, and particularly that England would decide on prompt intervention, was unlikely. Poincaré's journey to the Scandinavian capitals would postpone decisions. The English fleet was expected to disperse on July 27. The premature recall of the German fleet would cause general disquiet and might be regarded in England with suspicion. Two days later he sent an agitated wire to his master. He had heard that the Kaiser, in consequence of a Wolff telegram, had ordered immediate preparations for the return of the fleet. There were no indications of attack in England; and, as Grey seemed not to be dreaming at present of intervention in a European war and desired to localise the Austro-Serb conflict, he begged that no such orders should be issued. In an indignant Minute the Kaiser denied that he based his decision on a Wolff telegram. The German Minister in Belgrad had reported Servian mobilisation, which might involve Russian and would involve Austrian mobilisation. He must therefore have his naval and land forces together. "If Russia mobilises, my fleet must be ready in the Baltic, so let it return!" Port Arthur, he added, should be a lesson.

The monarch was equally unsympathetic when on July 26 Bethmann sent him a telegram inspired by a report of military preparations in Russia. "If Russia decides on a conflict with Austria, England intends to attempt mediation in which she hopes for French support. So long as Russia takes no hostile step, I believe that our policy of localisation must be pursued." Moltke, he added, who had returned from a holiday, agreed. This telegram, drafted in the Chancellor's hand, moved his master to derisive comment. "Tranquillity is the citizen's first duty! Only tranquillity, always tranquillity! A tranquil mobilisation is a novelty." William II had no more desire for a life and death struggle than his constitutional advisers, but his explosive temperament

fretted against the precautions and hesitations of cooler heads.

Bethmann's chief endeavour was to dissuade Russia from joining in the fray, and on the same day, July 26, he sent a warning to the Triple Entente. Austria had officially informed Russia that she aimed at no territorial gain in Serbia, but merely desired to ensure tranquillity. Yet rumours of the calling up of several classes of Russian reservists pointed to general mobilisation. "If confirmed, we shall be reluctantly compelled to take counter-measures. Our endeavour is still to localise the conflict and to preserve the peace of Europe. We therefore beg Sir Edward Grey to work in this sense at St. Petersburg." Paris was informed of his opinion that the decision for war or peace rested at the moment in Russia's hands. "We feel confident that France, sharing our wish for peace, will use her influence in St. Petersburg to this end." To Russia he wired that, in view of Austria's repudiation of territorial aims in Serbia, the preservation of peace depended on her alone. "We trust to Russia's love of peace and our traditional good relations that she will take no step which would seriously endanger European peace." Later in the day he despatched a further telegram to St. Petersburg couched in graver terms. Military measures pointed against Germany would compel her to mobilise. Mobilisation meant war against France as well as Russia. He could not believe that the latter would unleash such a conflict.

So far the Chancellor had encouraged Austria and warned Russia not to intervene. But what would England do? After the Serajevo murder, writes Otto Hammann, a high official of the Wilhelmstrasse, "he realised that, if it came to war, England would fight against us. He said so to his intimates at the beginning of July."<sup>1</sup> Lichnowsky's insistent warnings could no longer be ignored. A conference of the four Powers in London seemed the only way to avert war, wired the Ambassador on July 25. If the Servian frontier were crossed, all was lost; for Russia would be forced to attack Austria or forever forfeit her standing with the Balkan states. The dream of localisation should be abandoned, and German policy should realise the necessity of sparing the German people a struggle in which nothing could be gained and everything might be lost. Nothing was known in Berlin of Grey's plea of a conference of four, replied Bethmann, and Germany could not drag Austria before a European tribunal. Her mediation must be confined

<sup>1</sup> *Bilder aus der letzten Kaiserzeit*, 75.

to Austria and Russia. The necessity and possibility of localisation should be strongly pressed in St. Petersburg.

Servia's reply, which seemed to the Kaiser to remove all need for war, encouraged the Chancellor to hope that the worst might be averted. On July 27 he reported that it accepted nearly all the points of the ultimatum; the diplomatic situation, however, was still obscure. England, France and Italy desired peace; Russia seemed ready to discuss with Austria the reserves in the document. Vienna's attitude on the latter point was unknown. "I have told all the Cabinets that we regard the Austro-Serb conflict as concerning those states alone, and have left Russia in no doubt as to the result of any military measure directed against us." Later on the same day Lichnowsky wired an urgent request from Grey. Germany should urge Austria to regard the Servian reply as satisfactory or at any rate as a basis for discussion. In his view peace could and should be saved by Berlin. The Chancellor was so impressed by this appeal that he forwarded the telegram to Vienna. "Having already declined the English plan of a Conference, it is impossible for us entirely to reject this suggestion as well. By refusing every mediatory action we should make ourselves responsible before the whole world for the conflagration, and should appear as the real authors of war. That would make our position impossible at home, where we must appear to have war forced upon us. Our situation is all the more difficult since Servia has apparently given way a great deal. We cannot therefore decline the *rôle* of mediator, and must forward the English proposal to the Vienna Cabinet for consideration, while London and Paris work intensively on St. Petersburg. Ask for Count Berchtold's view of the English suggestion and of Sazonoff's wish to negotiate directly with Vienna."

Bethmann was at last thoroughly alarmed. "We have at once started mediatory action at Vienna as Sir Edward Grey desired," he telegraphed to London. "In addition to this English suggestion we have conveyed to Count Berchtold the wish of Sazonoff for a direct exchange of views." He forwarded Lichnowsky's telegram to his master and reported his action in Vienna. "It will be for Austria to decide. If we rejected every kind of mediation, while London and Paris are working on St. Petersburg, we should appear to England and the whole world responsible for the conflagration. That would render it impossible to maintain the present good feeling at home

and would turn England from her neutrality." He was soon to learn that, after promising unconditional support, Germany's influence at Vienna had virtually ceased to count.

On July 28 Bethmann replied to Grey's appeal. The latter begged Germany to urge her ally to regard the Servian reply either as satisfactory or as a basis for discussion. The first was impossible, and Austria had rejected it without consulting Berlin. "We have gone far to meet England in mediating as we have, and I count on her recognition of the fact. Whether Serbia's reply goes to the extreme limit of the possible I cannot at present say, as it has only just reached my hands. It is suspicious that she mobilised before communicating it—that suggests a bad conscience. I cannot accept Sir Edward's assumption that Austria is aiming at the overthrow of Serbia, for she has explicitly informed Russia that she seeks no territory, a declaration which has impressed Russia. Austria, as is her right and her duty, desires security that her existence shall not continue to be undermined by the Greater Serbia agitation which reached its climax in the Serajevo outrage. That has nothing to do with prestige policy or with the playing off of the Triple Alliance against the Triple Entente. While, in entire agreement with England and we hope in continuous co-operation with her in every direction, we are striving to maintain the peace of Europe, we cannot recognise the right of Russia or the Triple Entente to support Serb intrigues against Austria." In this rather stiff communication there was no hint of his growing alarm at Austrian intransigence.

A circular despatch of the same date to the Prussian representatives at the German Courts and abroad stated the Austro-German case as a guide to their attitude. The Servian reply showed that the old policy of hostility would be continued. If Austria was not finally to surrender her position as a Great Power, she had no choice but to enforce her demands. The Russian press was preaching intervention on behalf of Serbia. But the latter, not Austria, had begun the conflict by encouraging Panserb aspirations. If Russia intervened she would be solely responsible for transforming an Austro-Serb dispute, which all the other Great Powers desired to localise, into a European war. The Panslav policy aimed first at the dissolution of the Hapsburg Monarchy, next at the destruction or weakening of the Triple Alliance, and therefore the complete isolation of the German Empire. "Our own interests

summon us to the side of Austria. The duty to rescue Europe if possible from a general war also moves us to support attempts at localisation, in accordance with the principles of German policy for forty-four years. If this, contrary to our hopes, is frustrated by Russian intervention, we shall have to support our neighbour with all our strength as loyal allies. We should draw the sword reluctantly, but in the calm conviction that we had no share in plunging Europe into war." Here was Germany's case, and it never changed. That she must stand by her ally on a vital issue seemed clear. That it was psychologically impossible for resurgent Russia to watch unmoved the chastisement of her *protégé* was hidden from the eyes of Berlin.

So convinced was the Chancellor that his course was right that he invited Goschen for a talk on the evening of July 28.<sup>1</sup> He wished Grey to know his keen desire to work with England for peace, as they had done in the last European crisis. He was urging Vienna and St. Petersburg to direct and friendly discussion. Yet if it was true that Russia had mobilised fourteen army corps in the south, he could no longer preach moderation at Vienna. Austria, who as yet was only partially mobilising, would have to take similar measures, for which Russia would be entirely responsible. When the Ambassador interjected that Austria would incur some responsibility by ignoring the Servian reply, Bethmann rejoined that he could not discuss the document. Austria's standpoint, with which he agreed, was that her quarrel with Serbia was a purely Austrian concern, with which Russia had nothing to do. The decision of peace and war rested, not with the Kaiser, as certain French papers declared, but with Russia alone. He ended by reiterating his desire to co-operate with England and his intention to do his utmost to maintain peace. "A war between the Great Powers must be avoided," were his last words. The sincerity of his desire to avert a conflict was as obvious as his determination to keep the ring for his ally.

While stoutly championing Austrian policy in his public declarations, the Chancellor privately preached moderation at Vienna. Austria had announced that she had no territorial designs on Serbia; but, despite repeated inquiries, she had not explained her aims to her ally. Serbia's answer had gone so far to meet her demands that a wholly intransigent attitude would gradually turn opinion against her throughout Europe. The German Ambassador was to avoid the impression that his

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* XI, 164, Goschen's report.



Government wished to hold her back. It was a question of combining the suppression of Panserb propaganda with the avoidance of a world war. Fuller explanations to St. Petersburg that the occupation of portions of Servian territory would be purely temporary might induce Russia to accept the situation. If war came, the responsibility must be recognised to lie at her door. Bethmann was no better satisfied with Berchtold's attitude to Rome. Should not Austria be clearly informed, he asked Jagow, that her handling of the question of compensation was most unsatisfactory? If on the eve of a possible European conflagration she threatened to disrupt the Triple Alliance in this manner, the whole structure would become insecure. Her declaration that, in the event of permanent occupation of Servian territory, she would consult Italy contradicted her assurance to Russia of territorial disinterestedness and would inevitably be known in St. Petersburg. Germany could not support a double policy. "I regard this as necessary," he concluded. "Otherwise we cannot continue to mediate in St. Petersburg, and ultimately we are taken in tow by Vienna. That I will not have, even at the risk of being charged with flabbiness." A sharply worded telegram in this sense was despatched the same day.

The Chancellor was fighting a losing battle, and he knew it. On July 29 he warned both Russia and France that continuation of their military preparations would compel Germany to take action. To Sazonoff he appealed to stay his hand if Austria, in accordance with Germany's suggestion, formally reiterated that she had no territorial aims in Serbia and that the military occupation would be temporary. He pressed Vienna to regard Serbia's latest attitude as a basis for negotiations, with the occupation of a portion of her territory as a pledge. Later on the same day came the news that Russia had mobilised in the south in reply to Austria's mobilisation of eight army corps. Russian mobilisation, he commented, did not mean war as in the west, for it was a slow process; relations with Vienna were not broken off, and Russia desired if possible to avoid war. She complained that conversations were at a standstill. "We must therefore, to avert a general catastrophe or at any rate to put Russia in the wrong, earnestly desire Vienna to begin and continue the conversations."

Late in the evening of the same day, July 29, Bethmann explained his attitude to the British Ambassador on the lines of a memorandum drawn up in advance. Germany continued

to strive for peace. If a Russian attack on Austria compelled her to fulfil her treaty obligations, he hoped that England would stand aside. The latter, he recognised, could not permit the destruction of France, but such was not Germany's aim. If England remained neutral, no French territory in Europe would be annexed in the event of victory. Holland's neutrality and integrity would be respected. As regards Belgium, they did not know what the action of France might compel them to do. If she did not join Germany's foes, her integrity after the war would not be touched. Such assurances seemed to render possible a further understanding with England. Her neutrality in the present conflict would facilitate a general neutrality agreement in the future. Goschen's report of this historic conversation, in which for the first time an abyss seemed to yawn under their feet, is less restrained in tone and adds a few details. To the Ambassador's inquiry whether the promise to respect the integrity of France covered her colonial possessions Bethmann replied in the negative. It was this significant reservation which stirred Grey to the first angry words he had uttered since the crisis began.

On July 30 Bethmann forwarded to Vienna Lichnowsky's report of Grey's impressive warning of July 29, with a pathetically urgent appeal. "If Austria rejects all mediation, we are faced with a conflagration in which England is against us, Italy and Roumania in all probability not with us, and we should be two Great Powers to four." Owing to England's hostility Germany would bear the brunt. Austria's political prestige, the honour of her army, and her legitimate claims on Servia could be adequately secured by the occupation of Belgrad or other places. It would strengthen her position in the Balkans by the humiliation of Servia and in relation to Russia. "Under these circumstances we must urge the Vienna Cabinet to accept mediation for honourable conditions. Otherwise the responsibility for the results would be exceedingly heavy for Austria and ourselves." A second telegram forwarded a despatch conveying Sazonoff's complaint that Austria declined discussion. "We cannot ask Austria to negotiate with Servia, with whom she is at war. But the refusal of any discussion with St. Petersburg would be a grave error, for it would actually provoke Russia to intervene, which it is Austria's chief interest to avoid. We are indeed ready to fulfil our duty as allies, but we must decline to be dragged into a world conflagration by Vienna, wantonly and in neglect

of our advice. Vienna also seems to ignore our counsels in regard to Italy." In the evening a further telegram, drafted in the Chancellor's hand, renewed the appeal. If Austria was intransigent, it would hardly be possible to attribute to Russia the guilt of a European conflagration. The effect of the Chancellor's exhortations was diminished, if not absolutely nullified, by a telegram from Moltke to Conrad urging instant mobilisation against Russia, and adding that Germany would follow suit. There is no evidence that Bethmann was aware of this communication. But that military pressure was beginning to tell on him is indicated by a wire despatched shortly before midnight countermanding for the present Tschirschky's instructions to urge the plan of a halt in Belgrad.

In the course of the day Bethmann described the situation to the Prussian Ministry. The Emperor had worked for an understanding between Vienna and St. Petersburg. Austria had declared that she had no territorial aims. She had been advised to tell Russia that Servia had only partially accepted her wishes, and it was quite uncertain whether the promises of the latter would be kept. Austria would therefore take guarantees for the conduct of the Servian Government by a temporary occupation. This *démarche* of July 29 had not yet been answered. It was of the utmost importance that Russia should appear as the guilty party. This would result from such an Austrian declaration, which would reduce Russia's contentions to absurdity. Moreover the Servian answer accepted the Austrian demands except on minor points. An exchange of telegrams with the Tsar was in progress. Germany and England had taken all steps to avoid a European war. Russian mobilisation had been declared, but her measures were not to be compared with those of western Europe, for her troops could remain for weeks in this state of mobilisation. The Austrian corps mobilised in the south had no point against Russia, and those mobilised in Bohemia were due to the uncertain attitude of the Czechs. Before fresh decisions were taken the result of German action at Vienna should be awaited. The declaration of *Drohende Kriegsgefahr* involved mobilisation, which for Germany meant war.

Turning to other nations, the Chancellor declared that nothing could be hoped from England, who would side with the Dual Alliance. Italy's attitude was ambiguous. The Austro-Serb conflict was unpopular, as it was believed to be contrary to Italian interests in the Balkans. He had urged

Austria to agree with her, but without result. Austria, in fact, was very difficult. Help from Roumania was not to be counted on, nor from Bulgaria, where the Government would probably be upset and a Russophil Ministry installed. The military measures in Russia and France resembled the proclamation of *Drohende Kriegsgefahr* in Germany. That morning Russia had announced that no mobilisation against Germany had taken place. All Governments, including Russia, and the great majority of the peoples were pacific; but control had been lost and the stone had started to roll. So long as his *démarche* in Vienna was not rejected, he would continue to hope and to work for peace. The most striking feature of the speech was the recognition that England would side with her friends.

Russia's general mobilisation, decreed on the afternoon of July 30 and known next morning, produced the same effect in Germany as the German violation of Belgian neutrality was to produce in England. Since war was already regarded as virtually inevitable the news came as a relief, for no better cry could be desired to rally the nation than the threat of a Russian invasion. *Drohende Kriegsgefahr* was proclaimed, and Russia was summoned to countermand all war measures against Austria and Germany within twelve hours. France was asked whether she would remain neutral in a Russo-German war. If so—though such an answer was improbable—the fortresses of Toul and Verdun should be surrendered as a pledge for the duration of the war. In announcing to Rome the imminence of a conflict on two fronts, the Chancellor added that Germany counted on the fulfilment of her treaty obligations. In his mediatorial rôle at Vienna, he wired to Lichnowsky, he had gone to the utmost limit of what was possible with a sovereign state and an ally. Before Austria's reply was ready Russia had mobilised her whole forces. This was aimed at Germany not less than Austria, and it was impossible to stand with folded arms. The Ambassador was to explain the sequence of events. There was no choice but to proclaim *Drohende Kriegsgefahr*. To delay would be to expose Eastern Germany to invasion. The provocation of mobilising against Germany while she was mediating in Vienna at Russia's request was so strong that no German would understand it if sharp measures were not adopted. The Kaiser telegraphed to Francis Joseph that he was ready, in discharge of his obligations as an ally, to begin war against Russia and France at once. Austria should direct her chief offensive against Russia, not

against Serbia, whose rôle in the immense conflict was quite secondary. And everything should be done to secure the co-operation of Italy.

On August 1 the Chancellor addressed the Bundesrat. "Against our will and despite all our efforts," he began, "unless God works a miracle at the eleventh hour, a crisis of unexampled gravity threatens the peace of Europe and Germany." It was not only the right but the duty of Austria to take action against the Great Servian movement which menaced her existence. It was a German interest that Austria should not fall in a struggle with the Southern Slavs, over whom Russia aspired to play the part of Protector. If the Austrian state were destroyed, the roots of the German Empire would be attacked. That had been its policy for thirty years. Thus, when Austria announced that she must act, they had replied: What you decide is not our business, but if the *casus foederis* arises we are of course at your side. Serbia's response had made concessions but had also declined important demands. Austria's experience had proved that mere assurances were worthless and that concrete guarantees must be secured.

The desire to localise the conflict, continued the Chancellor, was approved by all the Powers except Russia, who made secret military preparations, in the first instance against Austria. At Russia's request they had mediated in Vienna, asking Austria solemnly to reiterate that she sought no territorial conquest, that she merely desired relief from Great Servian propaganda, and that the occupation of territory was only a pledge for the fulfilment of her demands. England's mediation, which they had supported at Vienna, took the same course. While these negotiations were in progress Russia had mobilised against Austria, and the Kaiser had warned the Tsar of the consequences. Austria's reply to the German and English request was due on the previous day. She had at any rate resumed direct discussions with Russia. At this moment the latter's mobilisation on all fronts compelled Germany to move. Russia pretended that it was not an act of hostility against her, but to accept this view would be to sin against the security of the Fatherland. With an admirable and almost culpable tranquillity Germany had watched the military measures of Russia and France which prepared the way for mobilisation. She had risked losing the advantage of her quicker mobilisation: to wait longer was to invite invasion. An ultimatum had been sent to Russia and an inquiry to

France. If the replies, as he expected, were unsatisfactory, Germany would declare war. "We have not willed the war: it is forced upon us."

Could England now be kept out of the fray? On August 2 Lichnowsky wired that Belgium would decide the issue. "If we violate her neutrality, and a war against the Belgians results, I do not believe that the Government in view of the outburst of opinion could remain neutral much longer. If we respect her neutrality, it is possible that England will remain neutral if we use our victory over France with moderation." The appeal was fruitless, for the Schlieffen plan barred the way. On August 3 Bethmann charged Lichnowsky to tell Grey that they were driven to violate the neutrality of Belgium by the duty of self-preservation. "Hemmed in between East and West, we must seize every weapon to defend ourselves. It is not a deliberate violation of international law, but the act of a man who is fighting for his life." His whole endeavour as Chancellor had been, in co-operation with England, gradually to bring about a situation which would render the madness of a suicidal war between the civilised nations of Europe impossible. Russia had frustrated these aims by criminally playing with fire. "I confidently hope that England, by her attitude in this world crisis, will lay the foundation on which, after it is over, we may together create what Russian policy has now destroyed." A drowning man was catching at a straw. If England's intervention on the side of France in a European conflict was only too probable, as King George had told Prince Henry in 1912, who could expect her to stand aside when to considerations of the balance of power was added the treaty obligation to defend Belgian neutrality?

The Chancellor's historic speech to the Reichstag on August 4 was delivered before the English declaration of war reached Berlin.<sup>1</sup> A peace-loving nation, he began, desired to continue its work, but Russia had set a torch to the house. She alone had opposed the localisation of the Austro-Serb conflict. Germany had warmly supported England's efforts to mediate between Vienna and St. Petersburg, and had herself gone as far in mediation as was compatible with the alliance. When Russia, despite German warnings, ordered general mobilisation and France started military preparations, it would have been a crime to wait for the attack. "Gentlemen, we are now in a state of necessity, and necessity knows no law. Our

<sup>1</sup> Bethmann Hollweg, *Kriegsreden*, 3-12.

troops have occupied Luxemburg, and perhaps crossed the Belgian frontier. That is contrary to international law. The French Government declared that it would respect the neutrality of Belgium so long as its opponents did the same. But we know that France was ready to advance. France could wait: we could not. A French attack on our flank on the lower Rhine might have been disastrous. Thus we were compelled to ignore the legitimate protests of the Luxemburg and Belgian Governments. The wrong we thereby commit we will try to make good as soon as our military goal is attained. Whoever is threatened as we are and is fighting for his life can only consider one thing—how to hack his way through.” The day ended with the fateful telegram from London and the agitated conversation with Goschen, in which the Chancellor bitterly complained that Great Britain, just for a scrap of paper, was going to make war on a kindred nation who desired nothing better than to be friends with her.

Bethmann, like the other statesmen of 1914, never publicly acknowledged by tongue or pen any error of policy, but he was too conscientious to be entirely satisfied with himself. “When one comes to the question of responsibility for this war,” he remarked to Theodor Wolff early in 1915, “we must candidly admit that we have our share of it.<sup>1</sup> To say that I am oppressed by this thought would be to say too little. It never leaves me, I live in it. I am not speaking of this or the other diplomatic move which might perhaps have been made differently.” Perhaps Bülow, he added, with his immense resourcefulness might have found his way out of the crisis.

The Hamlet of modern Germany, “The philosopher of Hohenfinow,” as he was called, had inherited a situation which he was powerless to change. Like Grey he was a great gentleman and a sincere lover of peace; but he was an amateur in diplomacy and he was never master in his own house. He longed for the friendship of England, but he was forbidden to pay the price. With France there was nothing to be done. Italy was a member of the Triple Alliance only in name. The Potsdam agreement was a false dawn, for the incurable Austro-Russian rivalry remained. Thus, confronted by the Triple Entente, Germany was forced to lean ever more heavily on her only dependable ally, who naturally turned the altered relationship to account. Austria became the rider and Germany the horse. The paradox that the stronger Power should be taken

<sup>1</sup> Theodor Wolff, *The Eve of 1914*, 619-22.

in tow by the weaker was the result of the blunders which left Germany without other influential friends. When the testing time came in 1914 the policy of Berlin, as of Paris and London, was governed by the nightmare of isolation. Austria had determined to remove the Servian menace. If she ceased to be a Great Power through the loss of her southern provinces Germany would stand alone, wedged in between a hostile Russia growing rapidly stronger and an irreconcilable France. From such a prospect even the mightiest of European states shrunk back in alarm. In the Bulgarian crisis of the 'eighties Bismarck had bluntly told his ally that he would not fight for her Balkan ambitions; but at that time the wire to St. Petersburg was working and he possessed the friendship of England, which his clumsy successors had lost. On the other hand he had declared in his apologia, in a passage which every German statesman knew by heart, that the maintenance of Austria as a Great Power was for Germany a condition of the European equilibrium for which the peace of the country might be sacrificed with an easy conscience in case of need.

When Francis Joseph inquired whether he might rely on the support of Germany, William II and his Chancellor answered that he could. A refusal would have devitalised if not actually destroyed the partnership of 1879. Moreover the Kaiser's appearance in shining armour at the side of the aged Emperor in 1909 had compelled Russia to keep the peace, and it was hoped that a fresh demonstration of solidarity might perhaps produce an equally satisfactory result. The mistake of Berlin was not in promising aid but in allowing Berchtold alone to steer the ship. In entering on such a perilous course, where the existence of the German nation was at stake, the Wilhelmstrasse should have insisted on consultation throughout. The decision whether there was to be a world war, declares Bethmann, lay with Russia, and the blame was hers. He failed to realise that she had no real choice. The situation had changed since the easy triumphs of the Bosnian crisis. If she lacked Austria's excuse of self-preservation, she was driven forward by peremptory considerations of prestige. She had recovered her strength and self-confidence. Servia was flushed by her recent victories. England had drawn ever closer to her friends. The localisation of an Austro-Serb conflict was too much to expect. Bethmann himself confesses his mistake in believing that Russia would shrink from the *ultima ratio*, and that England would prefer her friendship to the peace of the



world. Warnings had reached him, but they were unheeded. Every war is a gamble, and the conflagration implicit in the German response to Austria's appeal was among the most desperate ventures in history. It is true that a struggle between the Teuton and the Slav was considered in Berlin to be almost inevitable ; and, if it had to come, the German General Staff preferred 1914 to a later date, when Russia's strategic railways on the Polish front would be complete and the Three Years Service in France in full operation. Thus the civil and military authorities were ready for all eventualities if Russia intervened. Yet when all allowances are made for the difficulties of the situation and the inexperience of the Chancellor in the maze of foreign affairs, there is little excuse for stumbling into an undesired conflict when the best cards were in the hands of the foe. Whether Bülow or Tirpitz, his bitterest critics, would have done better is another question. It was a misfortune for the world that post-Bismarckian Germany produced no statesman of the first rank.

SAZONOFF



## CHAPTER IV

### SAZONOFF

#### I

WHEN Tcharykoff was appointed Russian Ambassador at Constantinople in May 1909, the post of Deputy Foreign Minister was entrusted to Sazonoff.<sup>1</sup> Iswolsky's invitation, he declares in his apologia, was accepted mainly for the reason that after twenty years of foreign service he longed for home. Unlike his chief, who had served at many Courts, his experience was singularly limited. Born in 1866, he had served his apprenticeship under Iswolsky in the Russian Embassy to the Vatican. With Leo XIII and Cardinal Rampolla he found it easy to do business. But on his return as Minister in 1906, after three years in London, the change of Pope rendered the task of the representative of the great Orthodox state very difficult. He described Pius X and his ultramontane advisers as the Catholic Black Hundred. Realising the fruitlessness of his labours, he asked to be transferred to Bucharest or Pekin. His nomination to the second place in the Foreign Office was more than he had dared to hope. That he was the brother-in-law of Stolypin facilitated his rapid ascent.

The change in his fortunes proved even more significant than he had imagined. In their first interview the Foreign Minister announced that his resignation was decided in principle, that the new assistant was designed as his successor,

<sup>1</sup> Sazonoff's policy must be studied in *Der Diplomatische Schriftwechsel Iswolskis*, 1911-4; *Graf Benckendorffs Diplomatischer Schriftwechsel*; *Die Internationalen Beziehungen im Zeitalter des Imperialismus*, vols. 1-5, and *Un Livre Noir*. He tells his own story in *Six Fateful Years*. *Zaionchkovsky*, etc. *Les Alliés contre la Russie*, *Préface de Victor Margueritte*; *Kokovtsoff, Out of my Past*; *Taube, La Politique Russe d'Avant-Guerre*; *Nekludoff, Diplomatic Reminiscences*; *Sukhomlinoff, Erinnerungen*; *Rosen, Forty Years of Diplomacy*; *Savinsky, Recollections of a Russian Diplomat*; *Die Europäischen Mächte und die Türkei während des Weltkrieges*, her. von. E. Adamov, vol. 1, contain valuable Russian material. *Buchanan, My Mission to Russia*; *Lambsdorff, Die Militärbefullmächtigten Kaiser Wilhelms II am Zarenhofe 1904-14*; *Stieve, Iswolski und der Weltkrieg*; *Stieve und Montgelas, Russland und der Weltkonflikt*; *Eduard Ritter von Steinitz, Rings um Sazonow*, are useful. *How the War Began: The Diary of the Russian Foreign Office*, July 3-20, 1914; *Dobrorolski, Die Russische Mobilmachung*; *Pourtales, Meine letzten Verhandlungen in St. Petersburg Ende Juli 1914*; *Eggeling, Die Russische Mobilmachung und der Kriegsausbruch*; and *Paltéologue, La Russie des Tsars pendant la Grande Guerre*, vol. 1, ch. 2, should be consulted for the outbreak of the war.

and that the intervening period was to be regarded as an apprenticeship. Sazonoff replied that he hoped the time would be long, since his experience was insufficient. Embittered by his discomfiture in the Bosnian crisis, Iswolsky pined for an Embassy, but eighteen months were to elapse before the road to Paris was open. During this period he loyally strove to train his subordinate. In the year and a half of their collaboration the Deputy Minister was in charge for no less than seven months. Fortunately no major emergency occurred, for after the Bosnian crisis Europe entered on a brief period of tranquillity. Sazonoff was respected by everybody from the Tsar downwards. He accepted unreservedly the partnership with England which was Iswolsky's main title to fame, and shared the general conviction that Russia needed many years of peace. He had condemned the Japanese war, and he was far more interested in Europe than in Asia. The appointment was welcomed at home and abroad. Despite his outstanding abilities, Iswolsky had few friends. His successor had no enemies, for he was as free from personal ambition as Bethmann, Berchtold and Grey. That his relations with his late chief remained harmonious to the end reflects credit on them both.

The new Minister is described by Taube, Legal Adviser to the Foreign Office, as the exact opposite of his predecessor.<sup>1</sup> "Happily he had hardly any of his faults, but unfortunately he had hardly any of his qualities. Simple, modest, affable, upright, absolutely disinterested, with a highly developed moral sense and deeply religious, very orthodox and very Russian (except for a touch of Anglomania contracted during his residence in London and which formed perhaps the only real link with Iswolsky), he would have made an excellent candidate for the post of Procurator of the Holy Synod or of a leading prelate in the Russian Church. It was characteristic that he was credited in his youth with the intention to become a monk." He was rather a feminine type, swayed by his feelings, delicate in health, weak in will, changeable, inexperienced, short-sighted—in a word, utterly unfit for his responsible post. Yet he was welcomed with open arms by the officials of his department, where everyone was tired of Iswolsky.

The death of Nelidoff, which transferred Iswolsky to Paris, occurred while the Imperial family was on holiday in Hesse, and the first task of his successor was to accompany the Tsar to

<sup>1</sup> Taube, *La Politique Russe d'Avant-Guerre*, ch. 8.

Potsdam.<sup>1</sup> He was prepared for the encounter, and he had recently confided to the German Ambassador his desire for *une explication franche et loyale*. Would friendly proposals on the Persian question, he inquired, contribute to a *détente*? Certainly, replied Pourtalès, for Persia was the only matter now at issue. So insistent was Sazonoff on a frank discussion that the Ambassador scented a cooling off with England. Whatever the cause, the omens were favourable. The Tsar expressed his desire for the restoration of friendly relations with Berlin, and the Russian Minister at Darmstadt remarked to his German colleague that Sazonoff was the man for the task. Unlike Iswolsky, who passed for a Liberal, he belonged to the Conservative party which by tradition was Germanophil.

The approaching meeting of the Emperors aroused the usual suspicions in the west. The British Chargé was instructed to beg Sazonoff to keep the British Government fully informed, and not to conclude any arrangements regarding Persia or the Baghdad railway without consulting England and France. Sazonoff admitted that the railway would be discussed, more particularly its connection with the future Persian system. He would not deal with the neutral zone in Persia, on which England and Russia should take counsel together. In her own zone Russia, in her earlier negotiations, had agreed to the junction of the Baghdad-Khanikin branch with a line eventually to be built by her from the frontier to Teheran. Germany in return would be asked not to seek territorial or railway concessions in the Russian sphere. It was of extreme importance to prevent her from securing a concession for a railway to Teheran. England should be told everything that occurred. Nothing would be signed at Potsdam. If an exchange of notes on concessions in the Russia, sphere were decided, he would submit the text to the British Government before it was signed. The discussion of Persian railways would be academic, since there was no financial possibility of building them in the north for years.

On November 1, passing through Berlin on his way to join the Tsar, Sazonoff met the Chancellor and the Foreign Minister for the first time. Bethmann described him as a cool-headed and thoughtful man, who showed no desire to shine but knew exactly what he wished. "And what he wishes is first of all the internal consolidation of Russia. . . . Herewith he will ren-

<sup>1</sup> *Six Fateful Years*, chs. 1-2; *G.P.* XXVII, ch. 218; *G. and T.* X, part I, ch. 89.

der greater services to his country than Iswolsky with his restless and tortuous policy. . . . I feel that, so long as Russian policy is directed by him, it will be possible by frank discussion to resume the contact which was broken under Iswolsky and could not be restored while he was there." The Bosnian crisis, declared Sazonoff, had passed into history and would not affect Russia's policy. Her period of expansion was over and her sole task was internal consolidation. The understanding with England was limited to the removal of differences. If she attempted an anti-German policy, Russia would not be at her side. After seeing his master he would make concrete proposals about Persia. He hoped Germany's eastern policy would not obstruct Russia's vital interests. Bethmann replied that he awaited the proposals with interest, all the more since the German approach concerning Persia in 1907 had received no response. Germany's interests were purely commercial, but nowhere could she accept for her trade a position of inferiority. The interview was equally satisfactory to both sides. Bethmann appeared to his visitor thoroughly upright, an amateur in foreign affairs and not a strong man. Kiderlen he described as coarse, clever and well-informed.

Sazonoff joined the Tsar at Darmstadt and returned with him to Potsdam on November 4. The Kaiser expressed his delight at meeting at last a Russian Foreign Minister who thought and felt as a Russian : with such a man Germans could easily live in peace and harmony. Iswolsky was blamed for his championship of foreign interests—a hit at the detested Anglo-Russian rapprochement. His first task, rejoined Sazonoff, was to restore the relations of confidence destroyed by the Bosnian crisis. According to his own fuller report he called the Kaiser's attention to the menace to Russian interests from Panislamic propaganda, which derived encouragement from his claim to be the protector of Mussulmans.<sup>1</sup> The creation of a new Caliphate of Berlin was bound to disquiet Russia, who possessed over twenty million Mussulman subjects. The Caliphate of Berlin, replied the Kaiser with a laugh, did not exist. The English fleet, on the other hand, was a real danger.

Sazonoff's conversations with the Ministers were mainly concerned with Austria and Persia. The Russian and Austrian Governments, he explained, in renewing normal diplomatic relations, had agreed on the principles of their policies in the

<sup>1</sup> *Livre Noir*, II, 331-4.

Balkans, and so long as Austria did not change her standpoint the peace of Europe was secure. If more intimate relations were required in the interests of peace, Germany should build a bridge. Germany, replied Kiderlen, would accept the rôle, and Russia could count on her disinterested co-operation. Bethmann was much more precise. If Austria deserted the principles enunciated by Achrenthal and displayed an aggressive temper in the Balkans, she would not meet with a support which was not stipulated in any treaty and was opposed to German interests. Sazonoff remarked that he attached great importance to this declaration and would report it to the Tsar.

Curiously enough Sazonoff's report mentions the most important topic last. Once again the German statesman declared that Germany had no political aims in Persia, and, while seeking no territorial concession in the Russian zone, merely desired free entry for her goods. Russia, replied Sazonoff, had no intention of obstructing German trade. It was impossible at that moment to speak with precision of the railway in view of the situation in Persia and the difficulty of finding the money. If, however, Russia constructed a system in North Persia, she would be ready to meet German wishes by connecting it with the future Baghdad line at Khanikin, and by refraining from differential tariffs against German goods. In return Germany promised not to build or encourage the building of a line from Baghdad to the Persian frontier north of Khanikin, for strategic as well as economic reasons. In the event of the Baghdad railway being parcelled out among the interested Powers, Russia would claim the Baghdad-Khanikin section. "I consider the result of these conversations very satisfactory", wrote the Tsar on his Minister's report of a memorable occasion.

An anonymous interview given by Sazonoff on his return to the Correspondent of the *Figaro* adds a few points.<sup>1</sup>

R.M. Is Potsdam the beginning of a new orientation of Russian policy?

S. Certainly not. Our present foreign policy exactly corresponds to our interests and therefore cannot be modified. Its immutable foundation is the alliance with France. The Entente with England is confined to Asia, but it has had a happy effect on the relations of the two countries everywhere. Iswolsky did an excellent piece of work in 1907.

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. X*, part I, 563-5. Abridged.



R.M. Then what is the significance of the Potsdam interview ?

S. To have happily dissipated the electricity in the atmosphere generated by recent events.

R.M. Was the conversation purely general ?

S. We talked mainly of commercial questions.

R.M. No politics ?

S. We spoke of Persia, and I explained that Russia had no intention of closing the country to German commerce.

R.M. Was the Baghdad railway mentioned ?

S. The German statesmen seemed deeply interested in the matter, and we have no objection to the enterprise.

R.M. Was the Balkan question discussed ?

S. Yes, but only just to indicate the desire of both parties to maintain the *status quo*.

R.M. Were you not compelled by recent events to think about Turkey ?

S. Not particularly. But the German statesmen declared that they had no intention of supporting one foreign influence against another.

R.M. And if Turkey were to favour one foreign Power in the Balkans to the detriment of another ?

S. I can only say that, in making substantial financial sacrifices to liquidate the dispute with Bulgaria, we showed our fervent desire for the *status quo* and our goodwill towards Turkey. So to-day, we hope and believe, her conduct will be in harmony with ours. But we could not permit her to infringe the interests of Russia or the Slav states.

There was nothing to complain of in these carefully phrased declarations. But in another interview, granted to the *Novoye Vremya*, the Minister was less on his guard, for he attributed to the German statesmen binding assurances. Germany, he reported, would not aid Turkey in any attempt to break the peace. She renounced all claims in the Russian zone of Persia on the sole condition that, in the event of railways being built in North Persia, the interests of the Baghdad railway should be considered. Kiderlen promptly complained of communications to the press on matters under discussion, and added that the references to German relations with Turkey and Persia were misleading. This disconcerting incident emphasised the need of a written agreement. The British Chargé suggested that the object of the interview was to pin Germany down to her concessions, and Sazonoff confessed he was right.

With German negotiators, he added, one never quite knew where one stood. On the other hand he was reassured by the statements in regard to Austria, which he held to be sincere, and by the references to Turkey, which he believed likely to act as a check on the aggressiveness of the Young Turks. When Pourtalès unofficially complained of the interview, he explained that he wished to prevent the *Novoye Vremya* inventing false reports and to keep that influential organ in the straight path.

On returning from his holiday the German Ambassador paid a visit to the new Minister on November 10, and expressed his hope of continuing the negotiations so happily begun at Potsdam and Berlin. How should they proceed? inquired Sazonoff. In an exchange of Notes? It was most satisfactory, remarked the Ambassador, that he had heard directly from the Chancellor and Foreign Secretary that there was no ground for the common belief in Russia that Austria had expansionist plans in the Balkans and that Germany would support them. These assurances, interjected Sazonoff, were the most valuable fruits of his visit, all the more because they were spontaneous. He had not dared to take the initiative. The declaration, replied the Ambassador, corresponded so faithfully to the principles of German policy that he believed the Chancellor would not mind putting it in writing. He was ready, if desired, to inquire. He would be very grateful, replied Sazonoff, "for you can understand what importance the declaration in question possesses for Russian policy." Pretending that it was his own idea, Pourtalès added that perhaps Sazonoff would put in writing his declaration in Berlin that Russia would not join in any aggressive or hostile action by England against Germany. He would have no objection, replied Sazonoff, but he must ask the Tsar on his return. Bethmann welcomed the plan of a written statement and forwarded a draft. He also submitted for approval his proposed declaration in the Reichstag, stressing the pacific intentions of the two Governments and the removal of misunderstandings.

To put honest assurances into writing sounds a simple task, but the drafting of a formula satisfactory to both parties demands time and care. Sazonoff explained that the Russian assurance would not be easy to phrase. He was quite ready to assert that the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 had no point against Germany, and that, if a British Government ever worked for war against Germany, Russia would take no part.

But the declarations of the two Powers would not be of equal importance. Russia's promise not to favour a Germanophobe policy on the part of England went much further than a German promise not to support an expansionist policy on the part of Austria in the Balkans. The one was regional, the other general, as the Tsar had noticed at once. Pourtalès rejoined that the declarations were of equal value, since Austro-Russian antagonism was located in the Balkans. Sazonoff, in the Ambassador's opinion, was not running away, but he dreaded the charge of getting the worst of the bargain. His anxiety peeped out in his inquiry whether the exchange of notes should be secret. Doubtless as Russia preferred, replied Pourtalès. Perhaps, remarked Sazonoff, the questions of Persia and general policy could be treated in separate notes.

His growing doubts quickly stiffened into a refusal. Austria's assurance that she pursued no aggressive policy in the Balkans, he contended, diminished the importance of the German offer. Moreover Turkey was now strong enough to preserve the *status quo*. At these sentiments, so different from his declarations a week or two before, the Ambassador expressed surprise. The Minister endeavoured to cover his retreat by a further argument. No Russian statesman, he declared, could accept such a vague formula as the Germans proposed. What was the meaning of a Germanophobe policy on the part of England? Which territories had they in mind? All that Germany asked, replied the Ambassador, was a written confirmation of what he and Iswolsky had declared times without number, namely that Russia had neither the obligation nor the desire to support an English policy directed against Germany. "That I will repeat ten or a hundred times by word of mouth," replied Sazonoff. If, however, there was to be an exchange of documents, the obligations of both parties would have to be clearly defined and carefully balanced. "I cannot expose myself to the charge of having made an unequal deal. Your formula contains so many possibilities that I maintain my opinion that parity is lacking." Anglo-German differences were chiefly in the economic field. How could Russia pledge herself to a particular attitude in regard to an issue in this or that part of the world? Active support of German policy towards England, interjected the Ambassador, was not asked, but the refusal of a written declaration would look very suspicious. "Trust me", cried Sazonoff eagerly, "and you will soon find that you are dealing with a loyal

partner. We will have another talk in a year's time, and you will see that I have remained absolutely faithful to my promises in Berlin and that no exchange of notes is needed." German distrust of Russia on account of her relations to England, he added, was wholly unjustified. Germany was too suspicious of England, who was afraid of her formidable fleet.

At the close of the long conversation the real cause of Sazonoff's change of front emerged. "I frankly confess that I dread the effect in England of the declaration you require. Secret or otherwise it would quickly be known, and they would believe there was more behind it. The result would be that the difficulties she has made for us in Central Asia and the friction about Central Asian questions would begin again. The whole success of our agreement of 1907 would be compromised." In these words Pourtalès recognised the arguments of a recent article in the *Novoye Vremya* generally ascribed to Iswolsky, in which the new Foreign Minister was warned not to destroy his work. Despite this retreat, the Ambassador retained his favourable opinion of Sazonoff. Convinced of Russia's need for long years of peace, he genuinely desired to restore friendly relations with Germany. He was, however, an anxious and rather suspicious nature, and he played for safety. He was afraid that Germany was trying to compromise him with England, and perhaps also that England might abandon her Russophil course. After this talk Pourtalès advised the Wilhelmstrasse to drop the request for a written formula. Though a promising development had come to nothing, he kept up his spirits. The Minister, he reported, was sincerely anxious for friendly relations, desired to draw nearer to Austria, and was a convinced monarchist.

When the bright vision of an exchange of assurances faded away, the regional problem was taken in hand. On December 8 Sazonoff handed to Pourtalès a draft agreement. In the first article Germany promised not to oppose the Baghdad railway. In the second Russia engaged to connect a Baghdad-Khanikin line with the Persian system at that point of the frontier. In the third Germany undertook not to build lines to the north of Khanikin. In the fourth she declared that she had no political interests in Persia. In communicating the document Sazonoff explained that it was a reply to the German project of 1907. The reaction in Berlin was unfavourable. "A dupe's bargain!" exclaimed Kiderlen. A treaty declaration that Germany had no political interests in a country of the

size and importance of Persia, commented Bethmann, was impossible without loss of prestige. It was also so elastic that it might lead to differences of interpretation. Russia would have to undertake to connect Khanikin with Teheran as soon as the Baghdad-Khanikin line was begun.

After weeks of reflection and discussion Sazonoff presented a second draft which went far to meet the German demands. The denial of German political interests in Persia disappeared, and the building of the Teheran-Khanikin line was linked to the completion of the Baghdad-Khanikin branch. Sazonoff explained that if he made further concessions he would be stoned. At this moment he developed a septic inflammation of the throat which afterwards affected his lungs. He was packed off to Davos, and for a time rumour was busy with the name of his successor. Realising that he would be incapacitated for several months he offered his resignation. The Tsar declined, bidding him think only of his health, and Neratoff was appointed Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs. Owing to this misfortune the conclusion of the Potsdam negotiations, the handling of the Agadir crisis, and all but the final phases of the Shuster Mission fell to his deputy. The German reply on April 29 bound Russia to complete the Teheran-Khanikin branch within two years of the Baghdad line reaching the frontier. A second novelty was an undertaking in the preamble to respect the integrity and independence of Persia. Neratoff opposed the introduction of such a question of principle on the ground that it gave the treaty a political colour. A third Russian draft rejected the proposed mention of Persian integrity and independence, and promised to begin the Teheran-Khanikin line within two years of the construction of the Baghdad-Khanikin branch and to finish it within four years. If this draft were accepted with trifling changes, the Tsar would authorise its signature. Since the Agadir crisis was now at its height Germany gave way, and the agreement signed in August 1911, differed from the third Russian draft only in a few details.

Though the treaty aroused no enthusiasm both parties were fairly satisfied, and for the ensuing year Russo-German relations seemed almost as harmonious as they had been during the Japanese war. Though Sazonoff did not sign it the lines were laid down before his illness, and the confidence in his character felt at Berlin facilitated the negotiations. In withdrawing her opposition to the Baghdad railway Russia made no material

sacrifice, for it was beyond her power to prevent it. In securing German recognition of her predominance in northern Persia and preventing railway concessions to Germany in her zone, she disarmed a formidable rival. Still more important was the termination of the Bosnian quarrel so far as Germany was concerned. "I have never suffered from Germanophobia," wrote Sazonoff many years later, "not even in the mildest form of that political disease." Iswolsky was equally little of a Germanophobe, but his feud with Aehrenthal rendered cordial relations with Berlin impossible. Unfortunately the Austro-Russian antagonism remained. All that could be done was to blunt its edge by keeping the wires between St. Petersburg and Berlin in repair.

The negotiations had been watched with suspicious eyes in the West, where the solidarity of the Triple Entente was a paramount consideration. On his first official visit to the new Foreign Minister on December 9, 1910, the British Ambassador thanked him for reporting his conversations in Germany. His Government, however, had been surprised to learn that an Anglo-German agreement on the Gulf section of the line was on the point of conclusion. Of such a prospect they knew nothing. If it ever came in sight they would inform France and Russia in good time, so that they might negotiate on parallel lines. Russia, it was hoped, would make no definite engagement about joining the Baghdad railway to a Persian line until an Anglo-German agreement about the Gulf section was reached. This, replied Sazonoff, was impossible; but many years would elapse before the Teheran-Khanikin line could be built, so there would be plenty of time for negotiations. In a private letter to Nicolson the Ambassador confessed that he felt rather nervous about the discussions. Owing to his inexperience and to his unfortunate habit of hurrying his decisions, Sazonoff was allowing Kiderlen to out-manœuvre him. Grey gently reminded Benckendorff of the British attitude towards the Baghdad railway as stated at the time of the Kaiser's visit to Windsor in 1907. There was no objection to separate negotiations, but nothing should be finally decided till all the interested Powers were satisfied. That was precisely the position of his chief, rejoined the Ambassador. The proposed arrangement would not be accepted until Germany had also settled with England and France. Grey expressed his satisfaction, but noted that Sazonoff himself had not spoken so definitely. On the same day, in receiving the

first official visit of Buchanan, the Tsar declared that he would make no engagement concerning the Baghdad railway without submitting it to the British Government and consulting their views. The visit to Potsdam, reported the Ambassador, had not made the slightest difference in his cordial attitude to England.

This was satisfactory enough, but the Tsar was not in charge of the negotiations. Though Sazonoff's good faith was never doubted in British official circles, and Buchanan declares in his Memoirs that he was always a staunch friend of Great Britain, his readiness to bargain without consulting his allies was sharply resented. It was in vain that he argued that no harm had been done, and that his acceptance of the Baghdad enterprise merely applied to the line as far as Baghdad. "M. Sazonoff will find that a good many tares will come up in the crop that he has sown in German soil", commented Grey. What had happened once might happen again, as Buchanan pointed out in a striking despatch. "At the present moment both the Emperor and his Government are, I believe, sincerely anxious to adhere loyally to their alliance with France and to their understanding with England; but the course which the present negotiations with Germany have taken leads me to fear that, when it is a question of securing satisfaction for some particular or immediate interest, Russia may drift dangerously far into German waters. Nor must it be forgotten that the reactionary party in Russia inclined much more towards Germany than towards England, while there are not wanting those who are in favour of being on the side of the big battalions. M. Sazonoff's desire to prevent Germany poaching in the Russian preserves in North Persia accounts for the haste with which he has made proposals respecting Persia or the Baghdad railway without consulting our views or wishes." A fortnight later he reported more hopefully.<sup>1</sup> Sazonoff, he believed, was being gradually disillusioned, and, though the Germans might get the better of him this time, he would not be so easily taken in again. "He gave me the impression yesterday of being anything but pleased with them, and of wishing more than ever to keep close friends with us."

In a frank conversation with Benckendorff on January 1, 1911, Grey complained of the abandonment of the principle of discussion *à quatre*. Sazonoff's promise to Germany of a junction at Khanikin would weaken England's bargaining

<sup>1</sup> Benckendorff, II, 10-4.

power. The relations between England and Russia, so far as he was concerned, would remain as cordial and intimate as ever. He did not request her to back out of the new arrangement, for he did not wish her to be on bad terms with Germany. He merely asked her to be on her guard. England must now make the best terms she could with Germany or Turkey concerning the line from Baghdad to the Persian Gulf. Benckendorff's report emphasises Grey's sense of the significance of Russia's unexpected concessions, and Buchanan's despatches depict a weak-willed and vacillating Minister.<sup>1</sup> There seemed even a possibility that the Germans might be allowed a share in the building or control of the Teheran-Khanikin line. "We have new surprises daily", minuted Nicolson, who confessed himself completely bewildered by the actions and attitude of Sazonoff. "I feel that one must be continually at him", wrote Buchanan, "as he is so deficient in backbone." The best hope was that the consent of the Powers to the proposed 4 per cent. increase of the Turkish Customs, on which the kilometric guarantee of the Baghdad railway depended, had still to be secured.

Though France had fewer commercial dealings with Persia than England and no strategic interests at all, her disapproval of the Potsdam experiment was more bluntly expressed; for the spectre of a Russo-German rapprochement never ceased to haunt her dreams. Iswolsky, with all his faults, had been a pillar of the Triple Entente: Sazonoff was a dark horse. Pichon was incensed that his Russian colleague should have visited Berlin before Paris or London, and still more that he had embarked on negotiations without notice. Jules Cambon, reported Goschen from Berlin, was furious, and his language was unprintable. Paul Cambon remarked to Grey that it was more than ever necessary for France and England to keep in touch. Pichon's apprehensions increased when there was talk of allowing Germany a share in railway construction in North Persia. Russia's weakness in dealing with the Germans, he complained to Bertie, was deplorable, and he suggested declarations of solidarity by the Foreign Ministers of the Triple Entente. The proposal was impracticable, and he could only urge Sazonoff to make no further concessions without consulting his friends.

<sup>1</sup> *Benckendorff*, II, 10-4.



## II

The Potsdam agreement was followed by Anglo-Russian differences in Persia which for a moment endangered the partnership.<sup>1</sup> The Convention of 1907 had defined the economic spheres of interest, while recognizing the political independence of the state. With the growth of Persian nationalism, however, the divergent interpretations placed on this recognition at St. Petersburg and London became apparent. British sympathies were with the Constitutionalists who were struggling to reform their backward country, while the Russian Government favoured the autocratic Shah. It was not merely a question of doctrinal affinities. For the Shah, like his father, was amenable to Russian pressure, while the newly created Mejliss embodied the revolt of Young Persia against foreign exploitation. After the ruler, with the aid of the Cossack Brigade, had forcibly dissolved the Mejliss, he was driven out of the country. The Constitutionalists were at last in control, but the task of cleansing the Augean stables was beyond their strength. Though a Belgian official was already in charge of the Customs, more radical treatment was needed. At the opening of 1911 the Persian Government asked Washington to recommend a financial adviser, and in due course Shuster, who had served in Cuba and the Philippines, was appointed. Sazonoff would have preferred a subject of a minor European state, as he feared a consequential demand for the employment of a German as adviser to one of the Ministries. At this moment, to the great satisfaction of Grey, he promised to withdraw the troops which had been stationed at Kazvin since the disturbances of 1909.

When Shuster reached Teheran in May, 1911, Sazonoff was ill, and the Persian crisis was handled by the Acting Minister. It is impossible to say whether his chief would have pushed the defence of Russian interests to the verge of a breach with England. It is true enough that Shuster showed little consideration for Russian sentiment, and that in appointing Major Stokes, a British officer, to the command of a tax-collecting Gendarmerie in the Russian zone, he challenged the spirit of the Anglo-Russian entente. But it is equally true that his sole motive was to set Persia on her feet. Despite his dislike of Russia's high-handed methods, for which the Convention of 1907 provided no legal justification, Grey was com-

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. X*, part I, ch. 90.

pelled by his fear of Germany to sacrifice Persian constitutionalism to the necessity of maintaining the Triple Entente. Left without a friend Persia lay prostrate under the paw of the Russian bear.

Emerging from his long sojourn in the Swiss mountains at the end of the year, Sazonoff paid an official visit to Paris before returning home. He was aware that the Potsdam rapprochement had won him the reputation of a Germanophil, and he sought to remove the apprehensions.<sup>1</sup> Russia, he argued, both in her own interest and in that of European peace, should cultivate the best possible relations with Berlin. Moreover the maintenance of the dynastic friendship had been of service in 1875 and on other occasions when Franco-German relations had been tense. The relatively successful termination of the Agadir crisis had left France in a mood little disposed either to blame or to praise her ally, for the backing of England had been so effective that Russia did not need to throw her weight into the scales.

Sazonoff had desired to confer with Grey, but after an operation for abscess on the lung he was warned not to risk the Channel. He therefore summoned Benckendorff to Paris and discussed Neratoff's handling of the Persian situation with him and Iswolsky.<sup>2</sup> The British Ambassador reported the anxiety created in England by the demands on Persia and the presence of Russian troops in that country, and Sazonoff promised to review the whole question with Buchanan on his return. Russia, he explained, had many grievances against the Persian Government. Oriental peoples understood no argument but force, and consideration had been interpreted as weakness. He fully realised the importance of not allowing the Persian question to damage Anglo-Russian relations, but he thought England was needlessly alarmed. There was no desire either to occupy Teheran, unless it was absolutely necessary to obtain satisfaction, or to restore the ex-Shah. A Memorandum was communicated to him setting forth Grey's wishes, including the dropping of the demand for an indemnity and the evacuation of Persia by Russian troops. Sazonoff, reported Benckendorff to Grey, would resume his post with the firm determination to base Russian policy on the Anglo-Russian Convention.<sup>3</sup>

After three days in Paris Sazonoff spent a few hours in

<sup>1</sup> *Six Fateful Years*, ch. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Benckendorff*, II, 261-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Iswolsky*, I, 190-1.

Berlin. He found his hosts relieved at the termination of the Morocco crisis, but conscious that they had made a poor bargain. In reply to their question whether he had not found a new chauvinism in France and an intensification of the thirst for revenge, he replied that he had seen no sign of them. If, on the other hand, chauvinism meant the painful memory of the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, it was likely to remain. He was convinced, however, that she would continue the peaceful policy which had rescued her from isolation, secured her an alliance with Russia, and won the friendship of England.

In his first conversation with the Foreign Minister after his return to St. Petersburg, Buchanan called attention to the serious anxiety caused by Russian policy in Persia. Sazonoff replied that he hoped the misunderstandings and suspicions had now been removed. He took Shuster's dismissal as an accomplished fact, and promised that the indemnity should be moderate. A formula would be found concerning the engagement of foreign officials. Could he not promise the Persian Government, asked the Ambassador, that the troops would be withdrawn when the demands were fulfilled? Such an assurance, was the reply, could be given to England but not to the Persians, who did not deserve it. He had not the least desire to occupy Teheran, and he trusted that speedy compliance would render it unnecessary.

The demands were accepted by the Persian Government, Schuster left Teheran in January 1912, and a Russophil Belgian reigned in his place. The withdrawal of the troops from Kazvin was delayed by local disturbances, but Buchanan believed that Sazonoff would recall them as soon as he could without provoking an outcry in the press, and that he sincerely desired to restore normal relations with Persia. The Ambassador's confidence did not extend to Russian agents on the spot, who disregarded their instructions and forced the hand of their Government. And Sazonoff himself, though his good will was not in doubt, was very changeable. On Austen Chamberlain, who visited St. Petersburg on business in April 1912, he made the impression of little force of character.<sup>1</sup> This agreed with Nicolson's estimate of the same date, that he was weak and not very able. With such a man further surprises were always possible.

<sup>1</sup> Austen Chamberlain, *Politics from Inside*, 476.

## III

Italy's seizure of Tripoli occurred while Sazonoff was on sick leave. After the secret treaty of Racconigi and the virtual partition of Morocco between France and Spain it could be no surprise; yet Russia could scarcely be expected to rejoice. Though not directly concerned with the fate of Tripoli, remarked the Russian Ambassador at Constantinople to his German colleague on the eve of war, it was of the greatest importance to her that the whole Eastern question should not be opened up.<sup>1</sup> If Tripoli were seized the Turks might retaliate on the Italians in the Ottoman Empire; Italy might send ships to Smyrna, Beyrout or Salonica; and Turkey might then attack other Christians and foreigners. Such language was music to the ear of Marschall, who observed that an occupation of Tripoli would produce evil consequences which Italy did not intend and which nobody could calculate. On September 28, two days after this gloomy exchange, the Italian ultimatum was launched. Russia had pledged herself at Racconigi not to obstruct Italian ambitions in Tripoli; and though Kokovtsoff described the ultimatum as brutal, there was no desire to interfere. Russia was as anxious as any other Power to localize the conflagration, for she had not recovered her strength. Her other aims were to preserve the newly won friendship of Rome, to prevent the closing of the Straits to Russian commerce, and to seize the opportunity of Turkey's difficulties to revive a historic claim.<sup>2</sup>

Directly the war began Iswolsky, exceeding the customary duties of an Ambassador, persuaded Neratoff to act. Tcharykoff accordingly presented a draft convention by which Russia promised Turkey support against an attack on the Straits and the adjoining territories. For this purpose she would be allowed free passage for her ships through the Straits. She would provide for the junction of the Anatolian and Transcaucasian railways, consent to a 4 per cent. increase in the customs, discuss the abolition of the Capitulations, and see that the *status quo* in the Balkans remained undisturbed. The conversation was to be private and unofficial. A few days later Benckendorff informed Grey that Tcharykoff had suggested a rapprochement to the Grand Vizier. Russia should

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXX, 56-7, September 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Die Europäischen Mächte u. die Türkei*, I, ch. 1; Langer, *Russia, The Straits Question and the Origins of the Balkan League*, 1908-12, *Political Science Quarterly*, September 1928.

induce the Balkan States to conclude an agreement with Turkey on the basis of the *status quo* and should guarantee the possession of Constantinople, receiving in return permission for her ships of war to pass through the Straits. Would England support such a scheme? Grey replied that he could not go beyond his promise of 1908 without consulting the Cabinet, and doubted whether we could guarantee Turkish territory. At this stage Neratoff began to draw in his horns. The personal suggestion of Tcharykoff, he explained to the British Chargé, did not at all represent the settled policy of the Government, which had not fully considered the question. He thought, however, the present moment convenient for raising it. Turkey might dread a *coup* against Constantinople and therefore might welcome a Russian guarantee. Her consent and the good will of England and France were essential to an arrangement. The secret quickly leaked out. Metternich spoke to Grey of the press reports that Russia had offered to guarantee Turkish possessions in Europe in return for opening the Straits exclusively to Russian ships, and that England was supporting the offer. Grey explained that he had promised Iswolsky in 1908 not to oppose the opening of the Straits on fair terms, adding that no change could be made till the war was over. The French Foreign Minister was equally cautious. When the Central Powers were approached, Germany promised favourable consideration, and Austria replied that Russia would have to pay for her consent.

On November 29 Tcharykoff begged the Grand Vizier for a reply and was referred to the Foreign Minister, the question thus assuming an official character. Russia asked in writing that Turkey should allow her ships to pass through the Straits and should refuse access to other Powers. In return she was ready to facilitate the continuation of the Anatolian railways to the Russian frontier, and volunteered her good offices with the Balkan States. The Foreign Minister avoided discussion, but exclaimed angrily to Marschall: *Le grand coup vient d'être porté contre nous*. His intention was to reply that Turkey could not conclude an agreement with Russia which infringed international treaties without consulting the other signatories. The proposal, he cried, meant a Russian Protectorate over the Turkish Empire, but St. Petersburg, like Rome, underestimated the vitality of the Turkish people. A few days later Tcharykoff presented a draft treaty in six articles. The Foreign Minister listened to the communication and

proceeded to look round for help. Would not England, he inquired, regard a change in the *status quo* of the Straits as detrimental to her interests? Grey calmly replied that it would have to be discussed.

At this moment Sazonoff emerged and gave a sharp turn to the wheel. Reaching Paris on December 6, he granted an interview to the *Matin*. There was no Dardanelles question, he declared, despite all the talk in the press. A "question" involved a demand formulated by a Government and followed by negotiations. Russia had asked nothing. The Dardanelles were the narrow door through which all the commerce of southern Russia passed, and it was vital that it should remain open. There was apprehension that, in consequence of the war, the Turks might close it. Russia had contented herself with drawing the attention of the Powers to the matter. How much had Iswolsky told his chief? On his return to St. Petersburg the Foreign Minister admitted to the Austrian Ambassador that he had "to a certain extent" disavowed the action of Tcharykoff. But this was also to disavow Neratoff, who had issued the instructions. The Russian Military Attaché in Constantinople confessed that the Ambassador was completely covered.

The "Tcharykoff kite" fluttered quickly to the ground. How did the Paris declarations, asked the Turkish Foreign Minister, square with Russian action at Constantinople? Sazonoff, replied the Ambassador, had been very ill and had been told very little. The proposals had been made with Neratoff's approval. Since, however, his chief had telegraphed from Paris to leave the subject alone, he begged the Foreign Minister to regard the *démarche* concerning the Straits as *non avvenu*. To the Roumanian Minister he remarked that the question was only put aside for the moment, for Russia must be able to send her ships into the Mediterranean. Neratoff attempted to cover the retreat by assuring Pourtalès that the discussion had been purely academic, but the German Ambassador knew better. The Foreign Minister's illness had been a misfortune, for his deputy was not up to the task. The failure of Iswolsky's attempt to open the Straits in 1908 should have taught the need of caution. The Turks were always suspicious of Russia, and the attempt to gild the pill with promises and guarantees was in vain. Russian warships in the Bosphorus seemed to the Porte, as they seemed to Marschall, the end of independence. The proposal, though quickly with-

drawn, had the effect of driving Turkey further towards the Central Powers.

When the problem of the Straits was put back into cold storage, Sazonoff turned his attention to what he described as the most important and the most difficult question of the moment, namely the shortening of the Tripoli war.<sup>1</sup> It would be a good opportunity, he remarked to the German Ambassador, to act together, and to show that the groups could pursue their common interests. Might not the Powers suggest an armistice, during which the belligerents could agree to withdraw their troops from the theatre of war? Italy would doubtless carry on the struggle with the Arabs, while Turkey would be spared the humiliation of signing away her possessions. He was not making a formal proposal but throwing out an idea. It would be best if the initiative were to be taken by a Power less suspect than Russia. "Friendly but very serious pressure" should be applied by the Powers collectively. Tripoli, it should be pointed out to Turkey, was virtually lost: a continuance of the conflict would strain her resources and endanger European peace. France, as the Power most interested in her finances, should be the mandatory of the rest. The Balkan sky would look very black if the war lasted into the spring.

The project was impracticable. Experts such as Marschall, declared that the desertion of the Arabs by the Turks would ruin the Sultan's prestige throughout the Islamic world; moreover he could carry on the struggle for a long time. Sazonoff informed Buchanan that all the Powers had expressed themselves favourable in principle, though none had returned a definite reply. The Turkish Ambassador, on the other hand, in referring to rumours of mediation, told him that his country would never sell the Arab provinces. If this was the view of the Turkish Government, added the Foreign Minister, the Powers would have to consider means of pressure. They might eventually have to tell Turkey that they could not allow the general peace to be jeopardised by a prolonged war; that, if she refused an indemnity now, Italy might decline to pay; and that the Powers might be compelled to recognise the annexation. To Pourtalès he explained that he had been misunderstood. He was not thinking of immediate action at Rome and Constantinople, and he would carefully consider any other proposals. His plan that France should act as mandatory of

<sup>1</sup> *G.P.* vol. XXX, ch. 237 and *G. and T.* IX, part I, ch. 74.

Europe was unpopular, and it would be dropped. Turkey's material losses were small, but her recovery of Tripoli was impossible. If the war continued, she might have to accept much harder conditions. He was convinced that, if she saw a united Europe confronting her, she would accept the proposals, which were as honourable as circumstances allowed. If she refused to listen, *un langage un peu comminatoire* would have to be employed. The main difficulty was in Constantinople; but when Kiderlen visited Rome in the latter half of January 1912, he found Italy equally opposed to compromise.

Despite the intransigence of the belligerents and the caution of the neutrals, Sazonoff did not abandon hope. In a Memorandum to the Powers at the end of January he recognised that, in the existing military situation, Turkey could not be expected to accept an armistice or withdraw her troops, and that certain Powers objected to any pressure. But the continuance of the war caused disquietude throughout the Ottoman Empire, above all in the Balkan peninsula where so many questions awaited solution. The Powers could not remain passive spectators. More important than the ties binding them to one or other belligerent was the maintenance of European peace. They would have to decide before long whether it would not be useful to apply a certain pressure rather than risk the conflict spreading to other parts of the empire. How far did they accept the necessity of a joint pacificatory action in the event of a threat to European peace? To Pourtalès he complained sharply of Marschall's hostility to his plan, and he painted the scene in dark colours. The bands were starting again, trouble in Albania would recur in the spring, and Italy might employ new methods of pressure. The danger of a larger conflagration was real, and Europe must be diplomatically prepared.

Sazonoff's plan that the Powers should be ready to mediate was generally approved, and Grey suggested an invitation to Turkey to entrust her cause to them. In an *Aide-Mémoire* Sazonoff proposed that, before this was done, Italy should be requested to tell the Powers the minimum conditions on which she would accept intervention. The five Ambassadors in Rome proceeded to ask her to state her terms. She replied that the cessation of hostilities must be based on her full sovereignty in Tripoli. Recognition by Turkey would not be asked, but her troops must be removed. Italy would make certain economic and financial concessions in return. When the suggestion that the troops should be recalled aroused



indignation at Constantinople, Sazonoff proposed an inquiry on what conditions Turkey would accept mediation. The question put by the Ambassadors met with an uncompromising reply. Neither formally nor tacitly could she abandon her provinces. Thus the conflict drifted on till the autumn, when the attack of the Balkan states compelled the Turks to yield.

Though he failed to terminate the war, Sazonoff succeeded in another aim to which he attached even greater importance. Inheriting from his predecessor the rapprochement with Italy, he cherished it like a tender plant. His sympathies in the Tripoli conflict were as unconcealed as those of Marschall on the other side. Tcharykoff was dismissed in the belief that he was counter-working the plan of mediation. At the end of February Grey asked the Powers whether, in the expected event of Turkey closing the Dardanelles, they would invite Italy to abstain from hostile operations in that quarter. The Powers, replied Sazonoff, would hardly be justified as neutrals in presenting such a request, and Italy might regard it as an attempt to restrict her operations. He was most anxious to avoid any step which she could possibly resent, as he wished to keep on the friendliest terms with her. She was a valuable counterpoise to Austria in the Balkans, and ever since the Racconigi meeting the two Governments had kept in close touch in that part of the world.

On April 18 the Italians bombarded the forts at the entrance to the Dardanelles, and the same evening the Straits were closed to foreign shipping. Russia promptly protested, expressing the firm hope that, directly the danger of attack had passed, the Straits would be reopened, and threatening to claim indemnities for the losses incurred if they remained closed. There was no need, for they were reopened after a fortnight. On the other hand Sazonoff refused to join in friendly representations at Rome about the naval attack. What did he hope to gain, asked Buchanan bluntly, by so assiduously courting Italy? "I do not want her", was the frank reply, "to send, as she has undertaken to do, army corps into Galicia in the event of a Russo-German war." After a moment's pause he added mysteriously: "She will not do this now." Like other statesmen he was continually thinking about a European war and the balance of forces if it occurred. Unlike Tcharykoff he believed that with Turkey there was nothing to be done. Italy, on the contrary, despite her partnership in the Triple Alliance, might be coaxed into neutrality. Thus the

Tripoli war was not without its consolations. Turkey was weakened, and an opportunity was provided for Russia to render service to her new friend.

Though Sazonoff occasionally spoke of the possibility of a Russo-German conflict, he welcomed the improvement of relations following the Potsdam interview. The meeting at Port Baltic between the rulers and their Ministers in July, 1912, was no less cordial.<sup>1</sup> The conversations, he reported to the Tsar, left a very favourable impression. Germany, declared Bethmann, realising the utility of the groupings of the Powers from the point of view of peace, had no desire to change the system. He had no doubt of her pacific dispositions, replied Sazonoff; but would she use her influence to avoid being drawn into an international conflict and to restrain Austria from acts of aggression in the Balkans? Without hesitation the Chancellor replied in the affirmative, and expressed his hope that Russia would continue to moderate the appetites of the Balkan states, particularly Bulgaria.

Contrary to the apprehensions of Paris and London no proposal for the ending of the Tripoli war was made, and it was clear that Germany would prefer the belligerents to make peace without foreign intervention. Sazonoff remarked that the fate of the Aegean islands occupied by Italy concerned all Europe and that Germany would have to share in the discussion, to which Bethmann made no objection. The only point on which hosts and guests differed was the proposed loan to China. The Straits, the Baghdad railway and Persia were not mentioned. "Thus the interview", concluded Sazonoff's report to the Tsar, "if it has confirmed our good relations with the Berlin Cabinet, has made no change in our relations with the other Powers, and therefore provides no ground for the jealous anxieties of Paris and London." He made the same excellent impression as in 1910. When the Tsar asked Bethmann how he was satisfied with him, the Chancellor spoke gratefully of their trustful relations. Whatever critics might have said about Sazonoff's conduct at Potsdam, there was nothing to censure at Baltic Port. Yet the French always disliked a meeting of the Emperors, and the English had not forgotten the Potsdam adventure. In the summer of 1912, as in the autumn of 1910, the Russian Foreign Minister was more trusted in Berlin and Rome than in Paris and London.

<sup>1</sup>*Livre Noir*, II, 335-8; *Six Fateful Years*, ch. 3; *Iswolsky*, II, 180.

## IV

The logic of events was too strong for the statesmen who endeavoured to localise the Tripoli war. Turkey's extremity was the Balkans' opportunity. Individually the little states were powerless. But what if they were to combine and to receive the blessing of St. Petersburg? Sazonoff declared that Russia's mission—the Balkans for the Balkan peoples—was fulfilled, and that he never dreamed of taking advantage of Turkey's embarrassments. Yet he sponsored the formation of a Balkan League, the *raison d'être* of which was the destruction of Turkish power in Europe. He admits in his apologia that there was a risk of war, but he argues that he had no choice.<sup>1</sup> Turkish rule in the Balkans appeared to him a horrible anachronism. The anxiety in the West generated by the Potsdam episode was intensified by the discovery in the spring of 1912 that he had sown tares in the Balkan field. The Tsar appeared to be equally incapable of forecasting the results of his policy. In appointing a new Minister to Sofia at the opening of 1911, before the Balkan negotiations had begun, he said in solemn tones: "Listen to me, Nekludoff. Do not for one instance lose sight of the fact that we cannot go to war. Everything which leads to war must be avoided. It would be out of the question for us to face a war for five or six years."<sup>2</sup>

At the end of September 1911, the acting Bulgarian Premier confided to the Russian Minister his desire for an agreement with Servia, and invited his opinion.<sup>3</sup> Nekludoff hurried off to Davos, where he found Sazonoff well enough for a talk. "Perfect! If only it could be done! Bulgaria closely allied to Servia in the political and economic sphere! Five hundred thousand bayonets to guard the Balkans would bar the road for ever to German penetration and Austrian invasion." When Nekludoff suggested that an Austrian invasion was far less probable than a Bulgar-Serb attack on Turkey, Sazonoff sharply replied that Russia would prevent the latter. A loyal agreement, terminating the sad misunderstandings between Serbs and Bulgars, was highly desirable and should be encouraged. Neratoff should be asked for instructions.

A fortnight after the outbreak of the Tripoli war, Gueshoff and Milovanovich, the Prime Ministers of Bulgaria and Servia, discussed spheres of influence in Macedonia in the event of a

<sup>1</sup> *Six Fateful Years*, ch. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Nekludoff, *Diplomatic Reminiscences*, ch. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Nekludoff*, ch. 5.

break up of the Turkish Empire.<sup>1</sup> "I consider that the seed of a future entente has been sown", wrote the British Minister at Sofia in the first of a series of revealing despatches. "King Ferdinand will remain an unknown factor until the last minute." There was no thought of immediate action and there were suspicions on both sides to be overcome, but a new chapter had been opened by the aggression of Italy. Three months later, in January 1912, he reported very strong pressure on the King by Gueshoff and Daneff to consent to a secret alliance with Serbia. "The Russian Minister and presumably therefore the Russian Government—although of this I have no positive proof—are privy to their policy. The King has been given to understand that, in view of the present disquieting state of affairs, Bulgaria must decide once for all either to cast in her lot with Russia or with Austria." Russia, they argued, would not throw over Serbia if Austria moved, and if Bulgaria declined to co-operate she must expect Russian opposition. "Nekludoff considers that the King will have to make up his mind within the next three weeks. The whole matter is being kept very secret, and is not known even at the French Legation." Only the respective Russian Ministers, testifies Nekludoff, were aware what was going on.<sup>2</sup> "In point of fact Hartwig and I were the constant arbiters, continually consulted and referred to in each difficulty, however small, by both parties." Mindful of the Tsar's injunction, he accompanied his official despatches on the negotiations with private warnings. The replies from St. Petersburg were to the effect that everything must be done to prevent a conflict, but that a Bulgar-Serb agreement would be particularly welcome as a barrier against Austro-German penetration.

On February 26 the British Minister reported that the negotiations had reached a deadlock over the hypothetical partition of Macedonia. Nekludoff at Sofia supported the Bulgarian line, while Hartwig backed Serbia at Belgrad. When Bulgaria reluctantly recognised Serbia's claims to Uskub, the capital of Old Serbia, agreement was in sight. A treaty was signed by King Peter and Milovanovich at Belgrad on March 11, 1912, and by King Ferdinand and Gueshoff at Sofia on March 14.<sup>3</sup> After guaranteeing each other's territories, the states undertook to combine against any Great Power attempting to annex, occupy or even temporarily invade any portion of Balkan

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. IX*, part I, ch. 76.

<sup>2</sup> *Nekludoff*, ch. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *G. and T. IX*, part I, 781-2.

territory under Turkish rule. Peace was to be concluded jointly after a war, the treaty was to last till the end of 1920, and a Military Convention was to be framed within two months. A Secret Annex signed on the same day revealed both the complicity of Russia and the territorial ambitions of the allies. Any agreement to act, in consequence of the internal or external difficulties of Turkey, was to be communicated to Russia, and if she was not opposed to it military operations would then begin. The partition of Macedonia was mapped out in detail, and the signatories accepted in advance the decision of the Tsar in regard to territory coveted by both sides. The treaty, the Secret Annex, and the Military Convention were to be communicated to Russia, by whom all disputes concerning their interpretation or execution were to be settled. Two months later a Military Convention set forth the number and distribution of the troops.<sup>1</sup> In the course of the summer two supplementary agreements between the Chiefs of the Staff were concluded. The alliance with Servia was supplemented by an alliance with Greece, though in the latter case no division of territory was outlined and Russian patronage was not invoked.

Bulgaria, reported the British Minister at Sofia, had now definitely thrown in her lot with Russia, who had insisted that the treaty should not be revealed to any Power without her consent. "As Russia has been cognizant of the *pourparlers* and has played a considerable rôle in the successful negotiations of the treaty, she is considered in the light both of a witness and a guarantee of its execution by the Servian and Bulgarian Governments. This is especially important from the Servian point of view, because of King Ferdinand's character and lack of stability. M. Sazonoff exercised much influence on the Russian representatives both in Belgrad and Sofia, and the matter was finally clinched by the Russian Emperor sending for the Bulgarian Military Attaché in Petersburg and requesting him to inform the Bulgarian Minister of War, General Nikyphoroff, that he would view with favour a successful termination of these negotiations; and this personal pressure, added to that brought to bear by Gueshoff and Daneff, has at last decided King Ferdinand to cease his favourite *jeu de bascule* and to throw in his lot with Russia. By giving his consent to a defensive alliance with Servia, he shows his determination to

<sup>1</sup> Bulgaria's treaties with Servia and Greece in 1912 are printed in Gueshoff, *The Balkan League*, 112-33

oppose by force of arms any advance southward by the Austrians. We may expect that negotiations will soon be entered into between Bulgaria, Servia and Greece, and if successful with Montenegro, and later perhaps with Roumania. The foundation has now been laid of a federation of the Balkan States, backed by Russia, to oppose a forward movement on the part of Austria in the Sanjak." The Minister, unaware of the Secret Annex, did not guess that the first item on the programme was the destruction of the Turkish Empire in Europe.

The treaty, imperfectly known though it was, produced a very bad impression in Downing Street. In communicating the secret to the British Ambassador at Vienna, Nicolson foretold that it would leak out, and that Austria would take a serious view of Servia's action. It was most unfortunate that it had been concluded, especially under Russian auspices, as it showed that the Russian Government had no intention of working hand in hand with the Austrian Government in Balkan affairs. Russia's share in the making of the pact was explained by Sazonoff on May 16. Russia, he confessed, was the author. Greece, he added, had now made an agreement with Bulgaria. He admitted that Austria might discover and resent what had been done, but nothing worth doing could be done without risk. Hartwig's name had been kept out of the treaty at his suggestion. On receiving this information Nicolson remarked that the arrangement was more far-reaching than they had supposed, and that the distribution of the spoils in Macedonia had been decided. "I am a little afraid that Sazonoff is embarking on rather an adventurous policy, though I do not imagine that he or any of his colleagues or, indeed, the Emperor had the remotest desire to provoke conflicts."

Sazonoff and his master were playing with fire. He would continue to work for peace, declared King Ferdinand to the British Minister; but, if Italy struck Turkey a serious blow anywhere in Europe, it would be difficult to restrain the Bulgarian army. He would, however, never act in opposition to Russia. If they had to fight against Austria or Turkey, Bulgaria and Servia would march as one country. How explosive was the new partnership was confessed even more frankly by the Servian Minister at Sofia. Russia had persuaded Bulgaria and Servia to form an alliance, which Greece and Montenegro would join, as a barrier to an Austrian advance.

Her desire was to keep the ring for the Balkan states to fight out their battle with Turkey. As the outlines of the picture emerged it became evident that the Balkan League envisaged a reopening of the Eastern Question on the largest scale. The victories of the 'seventies, it was hoped, would be renewed, with Russia standing on guard against Austria, if not actually in the field.

The Triple Alliance remained in ignorance, and not even to France was the whole truth revealed. "An alliance has been made with our approval between Servia and Bulgaria", telegraphed Sazonoff to Paris on March 30, "for mutual defence and for the defence of common interests, in the event of the modification of the *status quo* in the Balkans or the attack of a third Power on one of the signatories.<sup>1</sup> Gueshoff and the Servian Minister in Sofia, Spalaikovich, have informed the English Minister in Bulgaria, Ironside, of the conclusion of this treaty. I beg you to choose a fitting opportunity to tell Poincaré orally, for his personal information, impressing on him the absolute necessity of keeping it secret. You can add that, as a secret clause obliges both parties to consult Russia before they proceed to active measures, we believe that in this way we have a means to influence them, and at the same time have taken steps to oppose the extension of the influence of a greater Power in the Balkans." A copy of the telegram was sent to Beckendorff in London. When Poincaré informed his Ambassador at St. Petersburg, Sazonoff expressed his astonishment and dismay at such indiscreet treatment of a first-class international secret. Asked as to the character of the new arrangement he replied that the alliance was strictly defensive, and that the Powers who might take aggressive action were not named. The signatories were bound not to move without the advice of Russia. What would he do, inquired the Ambassador, in the circumstances contemplated in the *questionnaire*? In case of aggression by Austria or some other Power against the little Balkan states, replied the Minister, public opinion would be excited and Russia could not remain indifferent. "That is all one can say in advance. . . . In any case we shall consult you before any decision."

The next communication brought no relief to the Quai d'Orsay.<sup>2</sup> Russia urgently requested secrecy in regard to the agreement, since its revelation might induce Austria to invade the Sanjak. This expression of opinion, wired Poincaré to

<sup>1</sup> *Iswolsky*, II, 76-779 and *D.D.F.* II, 285.

<sup>2</sup> *D.D.F.* II, 322, Ap. 8.

Louis, confirmed his apprehensions. Austria had been excluded from the discussions, and the combinations purporting to maintain the *status quo* might appear to threaten her interests. "What alarms me most in these Balkan negotiations is that Russia has entered on and pursued them without our knowledge and that she presents us with accomplished facts. If she really aims at an Austro-Italian-Russian entente, that is a policy which affects the equilibrium of Europe and consequently concerns our alliance and the Triple Entente. France, faithful to the alliance, never enters on a diplomatic conversation without agreement with Russia. We have the right to be treated with the same consideration, and I beg you to seize the first opportunity to tell M. Sazonoff that in such grave matters we cannot be satisfied with information after the event. Please therefore ask him whether, in ratifying the Serb-Bulgar pact, he has taken precautions in regard to Austria and whether he has no reason to share the fears of M. Iswolsky."

It was essential to remain in contact with the Russian Government, explained Poincaré to Louis, if only to learn its real designs. If Sazonoff shirked the intimate exchanges suggested by his *questionnaire*, should not Kokovtsoff or even the Emperor be approached? The French Premier's annoyance breaks out in a private letter. In conversation with the Italian Ambassador Sazonoff had complained that Poincaré's policy had been a great disappointment, and had referred bitterly to the Chinese loan. It was deplorable that he should have told Italy of this slight disagreement. "What does this double game mean? What is the Russian Government after? We practise the alliance with scrupulous loyalty. Would it be asking too much for similar treatment?" Sazonoff, replied Louis, continued to speak to him very freely about almost everything. To approach Kokovtsoff or his master would be fruitless. Rejecting this advice, the French Cabinet decided that the Ambassador should request an audience of the Tsar. The making of the Serb-Bulgar pact and the recent demonstration of the Italian fleet off the Dardanelles demanded that Sazonoff should no longer shirk the conversation he had initiated. Poincaré's suspicions were not removed by the Foreign Minister's first speech to the Duma, which pronounced the alliance with France the immutable foundation of Russian policy and proceeded to an optimistic survey of foreign affairs. In thanking Iswolsky for the friendly references to



France, he inquired what Sazonoff had meant in speaking of an entente with Austria. Probably nothing more than the resumption of normal relations in 1910, replied the Ambassador, but he would find out. That such a question could be asked was a measure of the distrust with which the Quai d'Orsay was filled.

On May 7, after long delay, a Russian *Aide-Mémoire* discussed the second point of the *questionnaire*, namely the possible reoccupation by Austria of the Sanjak.<sup>1</sup> Such a step, it stated, was improbable except in response to a breach of the *status quo* in Albania or the Slav states. Yet, whatever its motive, such action would upset the Balkan equilibrium. Russia and France should respond by an agreement, in which England should join, to submit the matter to the collective deliberation of Europe. In the event of disturbances the French and Russian representatives in Vienna should keep a sharp lookout for an Austrian move and warn the Vienna Cabinet of the consequences. Poincaré approved the plan of instructing the French and Russian representatives in Vienna to keep their eyes open. It was equally necessary, he added, to watch the intrigues of the Balkan states, whose turbulence might provoke Austrian reprisals in the Sanjak. A month later Louis reported on Russia's attitude in pessimistic mood. While professing adherence to the *status quo* she foresaw that it could not be maintained, believing as she did that great events were at hand. On November 4, 1911, Iswolsky had asked France to recognise her freedom of action in the Straits. On January 24, 1912, he had expressed his desire for co-operation in view of approaching complications in the Near East. On February 14 a *questionnaire* was presented. On April 2 he had announced the Serb-Bulgar pact. On April 16 he advised the Italian Ambassador to occupy the chief Aegean islands, and Italy shortly afterwards occupied Rhodes. "The continuity of these Russian ideas is evident," commented the Ambassador.

Except for the news that a Greco-Bulgar treaty had followed the Serb-Bulgar agreement, France was told no details till Poincaré tackled Sazonoff during his official visit to St. Petersburg in August.<sup>2</sup> Iswolsky had declared that its object was the maintenance of the *status quo*, but so much time would hardly have been devoted to drafting agreements for that

<sup>1</sup> D.D.F. II, 440.

<sup>2</sup> *Livre Noir*, II, 338-43; D.D.F. III, 339-46.

purpose alone. Their core was probably a hypothetical partition. He had not seen the Greco-Bulgar pact, replied Sazonoff, but it did not fix a territorial line. He would communicate the Serb-Bulgar pact and the accompanying map. When at their next meeting he translated the Russian text, his visitor listened in astonishment. The *status quo* was mentioned only in connection with a threat. Bulgaria and Servia undertook to co-ordinate their mobilisation. If one of them had to mobilise, it would inform the other. If that other refused to follow suit, Russia was to arbitrate. Russian arbitration, noted Poincaré, appeared in every line of the convention. A portion of the frontier near Lake Ochrida was not fixed, but Russia was to decide when the moment arrived. The pact gave Bulgaria the east, Servia the west, without fixing the Bulgarian frontier towards Salonica or the Servian frontier towards Albania. "Thus the treaty contains in germ not only a war against Turkey but a war against Austria. It also establishes the hegemony of Russia over the two Slav kingdoms, since she is accepted as arbiter in all questions."

The French Premier did not mince his words. The convention, he complained, in no way corresponded to the information given him. It was indeed a convention of war. It revealed and encouraged ambitions. Sazonoff admitted that the Russian Minister at Sofia, in forwarding the pact, had himself described it as a *convention de guerre*. But as the signatories promised not to declare war or even to mobilise without the approval of Russia, the latter could and would use her veto for the maintenance of peace. Sazonoff's brief reference to the subject in his long report on the conversations scarcely conveys the anxiety and resentment of his visitor. Poincaré, he informed the Tsar, displayed a certain disquietude at the convention, pronouncing it aggressive rather than defensive and thus involving the danger of complications. While the Foreign Minister concluded his report with a paean to Russia's "sure and faithful friend", the French Premier left with a bitter taste in his mouth. How could Russia treat her ally with such scanty consideration, and what would she do next? While the signing of a Naval Convention on July 16 tightened the bonds of the alliance, the contacts of diplomacy were weaker than before. In a long despatch to Paul Cambon Poincaré reviewed Russia's suspicious dealings with the Balkan states, and congratulated himself that no decision on Bulgaria's request for a loan had been reached before his journey to St. Peters-

burg.<sup>1</sup> For weeks Sazonoff and Iswolsky had been striving to calm the apprehensions aroused by the Serb-Bulgar treaty. Russia knew everything, and, far from protesting, she seized the opportunity of assuring her hegemony in the Balkans. "To-day she realises that it is very late to stop the movement she has provoked. As I said to Sazonoff and Iswolsky, she tries to put on the brake but it is she who started the motor." No sharper judgment on Sazonoff has ever been passed by statesmen or historians in the rival camp than by his indignant ally.

Though Sazonoff dreaded the outbreak of war in the Balkans, he received rather coldly Berchtold's invitation to the Powers in the middle of August to take the situation in hand. He was willing to exchange ideas, he remarked to Buchanan, though he doubted whether it would be of use. It would not, however, be agreeable to Russia if Austria tried to patronise Balkan states. Collective representations would be resented at Constantinople, and the decentralisation recommended by Vienna required to be defined. The invitation to an exchange of views was accepted with a reservation against collective action. At the end of the month Buchanan described the Foreign Minister as very pessimistic, but strongly opposed to the idea of a Conference. He particularly disliked the prospect of Austria taking the lead, and thought that, if a meeting was inevitable, it should be proposed by France. A second and more detailed communication from Berchtold on September 2 relieved his apprehensions on that score, for there was no mention of a Conference. He approved in principle the Vienna proposals, which included a request for free elections, but regarded them as impracticable. His own plan was to make mild representations to Turkey, and to warn Bulgaria and Servia that in the event of war they would receive neither military nor diplomatic support from Russia. Servia could be trusted to follow his advice, but Bulgaria was more difficult to control.

The gravity of the situation was brought home by a conversation with the Bulgarian Minister on September 17.<sup>2</sup> The interview convinced Sazonoff that, unless the Powers induced Turkey to inaugurate far-reaching reforms, war was inevitable. He repeated his arguments on the dangers of the adventure. Russia could not allow herself to be dragged into war at the

<sup>1</sup> *D.D.F.* IV, 174-7, October 15.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T.* IX, part I, 690-5; *Iswolsky* II, 253-4.

bidding of Bulgaria, who would fight at her own risk and would not be allowed to retain any Turkish territory that she won. A revolution, replied the Minister, would break out if the Government did not move. Sazonoff promptly informed the Turkish Ambassador of Bulgaria's impatience, and pleaded for reforms in Macedonia without delay. Servia and Montenegro were again exhorted to keep the peace, and a circular telegram invited the Great Powers to co-operate in tendering friendly advice at Constantinople. To Austria he explained that he had no desire to poach on her preserves, and hoped that the two Powers would agree to pursue a policy of complete disinterestedness.

At this stage Sazonoff paid a visit to Balmoral, where he was cordially received by the King.<sup>1</sup> Nicolson was shocked to find how he had altered. He was really an invalid, and all his elasticity had gone. Grey appreciated his friendliness, but his low vitality made it difficult to do business. The conversations were mainly concerned with Persia and other Asiatic problems. Indeed the official reports of Grey and Crewe make no mention of the Balkan crisis. Instead of taking the expected anti-Turkish line, wrote Grey to Buchanan, he advocated strong pressure on the Balkan states. The official *communiqué* of September 30 aroused disappointment in the Russian press, which charged England with failure to support Slav interests. But for such support Sazonoff had not asked. In her Slav sympathies, Buchanan explained to his chief after the return of the Foreign Minister, all Russia was united, and neither the Tsar nor the Government could hold out against a truly national Panslav movement. Sazonoff, in fact, was singularly unrepresentative of his countrymen on the eve of a fresh conflict between the Crescent and the Cross. There was a reason for his attitude of which they were unaware. At Balmoral, wrote Grey in a private letter to Buchanan, he was much concerned at the blaze he had kindled by fomenting an alliance of the Balkan states. "His whole thought was to put out the fire, and his great apprehension was that Austria would confront him with a forward policy. While brooding on these things he forgot or underestimated the pro-Slav feeling of Russia. And now he cannot imagine how it was that at Balmoral he said so little about pressure on Turkey."

In addition to discussing the regional issues of the moment, Sazonoff seized the opportunity of his sojourn in the West to

<sup>1</sup> G. and T. IX, part I, ch. 78; *Livre Noir*, II, 345-59.

explore the state of Anglo-Russian relations. He complained to Nicolson of the Russophobia of the left wing of the Liberal party, and was assured that the Ministry and the bulk of opinion were sound, though his chief sometimes found it difficult to defend certain acts of the Russian authorities. Sazonoff asked Grey how the British fleet could help if Russia were involved in war with Germany by her alliance with France. If we went to war, replied Grey, it would be too risky to enter the Baltic, but we should blockade the German North Sea coast. Whether we intervened would depend on how the conflict started. Sazonoff's report reveals that our attitude was misunderstood by both our partners in the Triple Entente. "Grey spontaneously confirmed what I already knew from Poincaré—the existence of an arrangement between France and England in virtue of which, in the event of war with Germany, England had contracted to support France not only at sea but by landing troops." Of course Grey never said anything of the kind.

Sazonoff's brief stay in Paris was employed in working for peace. The demands of the Balkan states, he observed to the German Ambassador, were in the main impracticable, but they must be offered something.<sup>1</sup> Whatever happened, the unity of Europe, thanks to French and German efforts, seemed to him achieved. He and Poincaré jointly summoned the Balkan representatives and sent urgent warnings not to complicate a critical situation. Indeed Sazonoff and Iswolsky declared that, if war broke out, victory for the Turks was desirable on the ground that their advance could always be arrested, whereas great Bulgarian successes would involve Austrian action.<sup>2</sup>

On his way home the Foreign Minister spent a day in Berlin, where he assured Bethmann and Kiderlen that he expected peace to be preserved.<sup>3</sup> He did not deny the danger of patronising the Balkan alliance, but reminded his critics that Russia had explicitly declared that it must have no aggressive tendencies. The futility of this injunction was revealed an hour or two later when the news of Montenegro's declaration of war arrived. His chief apprehension was that Serbia might occupy the Sanjak and Austria follow suit, in which case the Russian Government would expect Germany to hold back her ally. When his hosts spoke of the Triple Entente he testily exclaimed: "Do not talk of it; we have our alliance with France, nothing more." He appeared to be dissatisfied with

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIII, 182-5. October 7.

<sup>2</sup> D.D.F. IV, 177.

<sup>3</sup> G.P. XXXIII, 189-93.

his visit to England, particularly resenting her tenderness for the Turk. Despite his evident intention to be friends with Germany, his hosts complained of various recent pinpricks. The atmosphere was decidedly less cordial than in Baltic Port, but of his desire to prevent a local or a general war there could be no doubt.

Sazonoff's report to the Tsar described the Persian discussion in detail, but he stated that the Balkan situation formed the chief topic of conversation in his visits to England, France and Germany. Poincaré's four point programme arrived while he was at Balmoral, but the plan of coercing Turkey was rejected by England. English policy, he noted, was governed by the desire not to estrange the Indian Moslems. Hence its apparent indifference to the fate of the Balkan Christians. A second consideration was the desire not to weaken Kiamil's influence at Constantinople or to facilitate the return of the Germanophil Young Turks. For these reasons, despite her desire to co-operate in restoring tranquillity to the Balkans, England had often raised obstacles to the common cause and could not be counted on if vigorous pressure on Turkey became necessary. The French Government was anxious not to endanger the capital invested in the Near East, and strove unremittingly to keep the Powers at peace. Germany took little interest in a Balkan war but, like France, feared to be dragged into a conflict by her obligations as an ally. He was assured at Berlin that Germany was ready to approve in advance any measures agreed on by Russia and Austria. Russia's relations with Germany, concluded the report, retained the friendliness that had been consolidated by the meeting of the Emperors in July.

Looking back on his handiwork after the Balkan war had begun, Sazonoff explained to Benckendorff Russia's share in the making of the League.<sup>1</sup> The object of the negotiations between Sofia and Belgrad, of which Russia was kept informed, was to end the conflict of the two peoples by defining their respective interests and spheres of influence in European Turkey. This aim was entirely approved by Russia, who had always regarded the feud as the chief obstacle to the stabilisation of the Balkans. Convinced that their new relations would be most satisfactorily arranged without interference by a third party, she had taken no direct share. When the treaty was signed and communicated to her, it was found to contain a

<sup>1</sup> *Benckendorff*, II, 469-71, October 31, 1912.

good deal which she disapproved. The chief purpose, however, namely the termination of abnormal relations between neighbours connected by ties of blood, was attained. In regard to her rôle as arbiter in case of disputes, she was not asked for her consent to the mention of her name. If, however, the plan had been refused, it might have given an unfavourable turn to the policy of the two states. This letter in no way diminishes the responsibility of the writer for the making of the Balkan League, and for the conflict made possible by the temporary reconciliation of his *protégés*.

## V

Montenegro's declaration of war on October 8, 1912, inaugurated a year of ceaseless anxiety. Berchtold and Sazonoff, as the spokesmen of the Powers most directly concerned, had the most difficult course to steer. They desired to localise the struggle and they coveted no territory, but they had interests to safeguard for which they were ready to fight.<sup>1</sup> The position of Kokovtsoff and Sazonoff, reported the German Ambassador, was not strong, but they had cool heads.<sup>2</sup> Yet no passing *détente* could diminish the fundamental antagonism of the two Empires. While the Russian people instinctively sympathised with the little Christian states, Austria dreaded the aggrandisement of Servia and the domination of the Balkan peninsula by the Slavs. The possibilities of trouble were endless. If Turkey won, the popular demand that Russia should prevent an extension of her territory would prove irresistible. If she were vanquished, the Allies might get out of control and the Bulgarians might march into Constantinople. Thus for different reasons neither Russia nor Austria desired a sweeping victory for either side.

Sazonoff's first step was to assure Berchtold that, if Austria abstained from occupying the Sanjak or Servian territory, Russia would not intervene. Austria's reply that she would merely concentrate troops near the Servian frontier was satisfactory so far as it went, but a frontier incident or some Servian provocation might provoke her to action. The danger of intervention, however, was not confined to one Power. If Bulgaria met with a serious reverse or some terrible massacre of Christians occurred, the Russian Government

<sup>1</sup> *Die Europäischen Mächten und die Türkei*, I, ch. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *G.P.* XXXIII, 198, October 10.

would be forced to act. Sazonoff's attitude of detachment was angrily denounced by the press, and it was rumoured that he would have to resign. Not a single paper, reported Buchanan, had a good word to say for him. He was told that he should have insisted at Balmoral and at Paris on the lawful demands of the Balkan states. He bore the reproaches with patience, affecting to believe that the enthusiasm for the Balkan states was engineered by the press. The British Ambassador knew better. Sazonoff, he declared, would make a great mistake if he underestimated the importance of the movement. Pourtalès reported that he never read the papers and professed himself indifferent to what they said ; but the Tsar was weak, and there were interventionists not only at Court but in the Foreign Office itself.<sup>1</sup> Sazonoff's belief that the Balkan League would prove a docile instrument in the hands of Russia had been shattered, and the limits of her influence in the Balkan capitals were revealed. He could neither avow his share in its creation nor punish his *protégés* for ignoring his advice. The tide of events surged past him, and if he did not swim with the stream he would be swept aside.

An official *communiqué*, intended to put himself right with the public, was issued by the Foreign Minister on October 16.<sup>2</sup> Russia stood for peace, but her sympathies were with her kinsmen as they had always been. Her military strength was considerably greater than on the eve of the Japanese war. She was strong enough to make her voice heard and to prevent any action injurious to her interests, though happily such action was improbable. The strength and solidarity of the Triple Entente were beyond doubt, and the Triple Alliance, completing the Balance of Power in Europe, gave no cause for suspicion. Indeed Russia's relations with each of its members left nothing to be desired. In particular, the rapprochement between Vienna and St. Petersburg was the best assurance for the maintenance of peace. The whole document breathes an air of forced optimism ; for its author knew that he was partly responsible for the war and that Russia was still unprepared to fight. To Poincaré's suggestion of a Conference he replied that preliminary agreement on its main principles was needed, and that, if held during the conflict, it would lack the necessary authority. Like other people he was waiting on events.

The Allies made a good start, but Turkey might recover when she had time to bring her superior resources into play.

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIII, 210-4.

<sup>2</sup> G. and T. IX, part II, 30-2.



On October 22 Sazonoff told Buchanan of his desire that the Powers should mediate at the first possible moment, as the Bulgarians seemed to be in difficulties, and he approved the Ambassador's suggestion that he should outline a possible settlement. He expressed his earnest hope that he could count on the support of France and England in any attempt at mediation, since, if things went wrong with Bulgaria, Russia might have to mobilise. If they failed her when the crisis came, the Triple Entente would collapse. The Tsar, he added, while anxious to avoid entanglement, wished to do his utmost to assist the Christian Slavs. Grey promised support for a new order in Macedonia. On October 29 accordingly a Russian note was presented in Paris and London, recommending mild measures of autonomy.<sup>1</sup> But by this time the scheme was out of date, for the Bulgarian victories sharpened the appetite for territorial change.

Sazonoff desired to combine friendliness to Austria with the solidarity of the Entente. "Please note", he telegraphed to Benckendorff, "that we regard joint action with Austria alone, even in the name of all the Powers, not only as undesirable but as impossible."<sup>2</sup> The improvement in our relations with Vienna has enabled us to localise the war. But if it is a matter of positive tasks, such as intervention or the liquidation of the war, we count on the closest possible understanding with France, England and Italy." How much Italy now meant to Russia was shown by his appeal to her to press Austria to admit Serbia to the Adriatic. At the urgent entreaty of Iswolsky a sum of 300,000 francs was allotted to purchase a good press in France.

At the end of October even the friendly Buchanan criticised Sazonoff's lack of foresight and consistency in the sharpest terms.<sup>3</sup> His position was not very enviable. In an interview with Dillon, the correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, he had proclaimed his agreement with Austria and his determination to maintain the principle of the territorial *status quo*. He had accepted Bulgaria's assurances that territorial changes would not be made, and had hinted that he did not desire her decisive victory, which might raise the question of Constantinople. He seemed to hold that the Balkan states should be kept in leading strings, and should wait for the fulfilment of their aspirations till Russia told them to strike. Circumstances,

<sup>1</sup> *Iswolsky*, II, 321-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Benckendorff*, II, 462-3.

<sup>3</sup> *G. and T.* IX, part II, 63-6.

however, had proved too strong for him. He had now made a complete *volte-face* and at the eleventh hour adopted the policy of his critics. He had abandoned all idea of the *status quo* and would probably be forced to support the full territorial claims.

This forecast did the Foreign Minister less than justice. A telegram to Sofia on October 31 warned Bulgaria to limit her ambitions in the probable event of further victories, for the alienation of England and France might lead Austria and Roumania to intervene.<sup>1</sup> The Balkan states could count on territorial gain; but the full support of Russian diplomacy was assured to Bulgaria only on the clear understanding that reforms and annexations must not extend east of Adrianople. "Beyond this line the whole territory belonging to Constantinople must remain under the effective sovereignty of the Sultan. In this matter no compromises are possible." This view was reiterated in a circular despatch. A defensive zone for Constantinople was in the general interest. All the rest of European Turkey belonged to the Allies by right of conquest, and Russia was ready within these limits to support their maximum practicable claims. Poincaré was confidentially informed that, if the Allies were to occupy Constantinople, the Black Sea fleet would enter the Bosphorus. To avert the danger of complications which such a step would involve France was urged to use her whole influence. By the end of November, however, it was clear that the Tchatalja lines would hold. It was an immense relief that Russian troops would not be required to fire on Balkan Christians.

After abandoning the dream of the *status quo*, the Foreign Minister was confronted with the problem of the division of the spoils. He sent Grey a copy of the Serb-Bulgar treaty of partition, adding that they should consider how to induce Austria to accept the plan to allow Serbia a corridor to the Adriatic. Constantinople and its district, he explained, must remain Turkish or become Russian, and Russia would fight to prevent its permanent occupation by any other Power. To Buchanan he spoke in greater detail.<sup>2</sup> Turkey should retain Constantinople and Eastern Thrace, while Bulgaria might have Adrianople if the fortifications were razed. The Powers must see to the welfare of the Greeks and Bulgars left under Turkish rule. Serbia and Bulgaria could divide Macedonia. Greece would receive Crete, Epirus and Thessaly. Albania, narrowly

<sup>1</sup> *Iswolsky*, II, 326-9.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T.* IX, part II, 80-2.

delimited, should obtain autonomy under Turkey. Servia should be given access to the sea at San Giovanni di Medua, or, if Austria declined, at Valona. Salonica should be a neutral free port; if not, he preferred Greece to Bulgaria as its owner. Roumania and Bulgaria, he believed, would come to terms on the basis of a small territorial cession. Russia asked nothing for herself. To the Austrian Ambassador he emphasised the importance of a final settlement of the Balkan question which, unlike the Treaty of Berlin, would leave no bitterness. A few days later a memorandum was handed to Grey urging the retention of Eastern Thrace by Turkey for the security of Constantinople. "All other provinces of Turkey in Europe should, in our opinion, be amicably divided up among the allies in virtue of their right of conquest." An autonomous maritime Albania under the sovereignty of the Sultan was admitted in principle, and the necessity of satisfying Servian aspirations towards the Adriatic was proclaimed. Russia was willing to advise Bulgaria to compensate Roumania for her neutrality. Here was a new map of the Balkan peninsula. The late champion of the *status quo* had travelled far in the space of a single month.

When the stiffening Turkish resistance laid the spectre of the Bulgarians in Constantinople, anxiety shifted to the Adriatic. Russia's aim was to secure the minimum for the Bulgars, the maximum for the Serbs. The object of Austria being exactly the reverse, grave tension was inevitable. Austria, complained Sazonoff, was making it very difficult to continue his self-effacing policy, partly by declining to join in a declaration of disinterestedness, still more by resisting Servia's claim to a port. What harm could the little port of Medua do to her? Yet he never identified himself with the more challenging claims of his *protégé*. On November 7 the Serbian Chargé at Berlin announced that, despite Austria's warning, Servia would advance to the Adriatic, as she needed access to the sea and was sure of Russian support.<sup>1</sup> "I disavow him", exclaimed Sazonoff excitedly when he heard the news. When Pourtalès complained that Servia was now asking not only a port but Durazzo and a large slice of Albania, he replied that it was out of the question. The only problem was whether she should receive a small strip of Albanian territory and a port. It was vital for a growing state to have access to the sea, and for that reason he supported it. To thwart her legitimate

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIII, 292-4, 336-8.

wishes was to threaten the peace of Europe. She ought no longer be cramped in her economic development, and she should be freed from vassalage to Austria. Russia must not be confronted with the same situation as in the Bosnian crisis. "She could not swallow a second humiliation. That would be war." These utterances, commented the Ambassador, probably reflected the new atmosphere at Court after the visit of the Grand Duke Nicholas to Spala ; yet, though Panslav and bellicose influences were more vocal, he did not believe that the pacific policy of the Government was about to change. Fortunately Kokovtsoff was a moderating factor.

Though Serbia was the favourite, Sazonoff was not inclined to give her *carte blanche*. "The question of Serbia's outlet to the Adriatic", he telegraphed to Belgrad on November 9, "has recently taken a turn which causes us real anxiety.<sup>1</sup> We remain ready to accord diplomatic support in co-operation with France and England. We understand that Germany and Italy are ready to join Austria in opposing her territorial aggrandisement on the Adriatic. The conflict must not be allowed to develop into a European war." The telegram proceeded to denounce the declaration of the Servian Chargé in Berlin that the Allies had partitioned the whole Adriatic coast, and that Serbia was sure of Bulgarian and Russian support. The losses of the Allies rendered a victory over Austria impossible. The despatch of Serb troops towards Durazzo, the annexation of which Austria would certainly not allow, was a symptom of dangerous excitement. "Tell Pasitch that the Serbs must not complicate the task of their advocates. In this question we distinguish between the end and the means. The end is the best possible guarantee of Serbia's economic independence. The means is the outlet to the Adriatic, either by acquiring territory on the coast, or by securing connection by a railway with another port on the same conditions as Austria possesses for the transit of her goods to Salonica. If Serbia gives way in regard to a port of her own on the Adriatic, it will be possible to insist on other demands, such as the extension of territory in the south and the narrowest limits to Albanian autonomy. If Austria does not see that it is her interest to safeguard peace in the Balkans, we believe that Serbia will understand that, after a short war and undreamed of acquisitions, too ambitious claims will only jeopardise these results."

<sup>1</sup> *Iswolsky*, II, 339-40.

Two days later a sharper warning was despatched.<sup>1</sup> Austria's determination to prevent Serbia obtaining a port was fixed and was supported by her allies. France and England declared that they were unwilling to quarrel with the Triple Alliance on this issue, and Russia felt the same. As regards the apparent decision of the Allies to carve up European Turkey without consulting the interests of Austria and Italy, such a short-sighted policy would destroy the sympathy of France and England. An Albanian state was inevitable. If the Serbs were less intransigent it would be easier to press their demands in regard to its frontiers and organisation. "Warn Pasitch against the expedition to Durazzo. The Serbs must not drive us to an open separation from them." Sazonoff begged England and France to join in counsels of moderation at Belgrad; and when Bulgaria announced her solidarity with Serbia in regard to a port, he urged her not to play with fire. After their heavy losses, Serbia and Bulgaria could not possibly deal with Austria. In such a conflict the Turks would attack them in flank and Roumania would intervene.

Warnings produced little effect at Sofia and Belgrad, where reliance was placed on Panslav sentiment, and Buchanan had little belief in Sazonoff's capacity to control events. Since his discovery that he could not lead public opinion, he had decided to follow it.<sup>2</sup> The Government, he repeatedly declared, could not resist public opinion in regard to Serbia's demand for a port, and he had pressed her claim at Vienna and Berlin to the verge of menace. The Ambassador, indeed, felt bound to warn him against too uncompromising support, which might confront him with a choice between humiliation and war. Sazonoff admitted that he would be satisfied with a railway to the coast, but unfortunately Serbia would not. He had warned her that she must not count on military support if she provoked a war with Austria; yet he was well aware that, if Austria attempted to expel her from a port, Russia would have to fight.

The stiffening of Sazonoff's language in the middle of November alarmed not only the Austrian and German Ambassadors but the British representative as well.<sup>3</sup> The Grand Duke Nicholas had been staying with the Tsar. If Sazonoff's views reflected those of his master, he wired, Russia would inevitably go to the aid of Serbia if she were at war with

<sup>1</sup> *Iswolsky*, II, 342-4.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T.* IX, part II, 148-50, November 13.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, 165, 177.

Austria. The matter of a port could not be left over till the settlement of the whole complex of problems came to be discussed by the Powers, as Grey had proposed. Albania, he explained to Buchanan, was a powerful weapon to extract a port, for the creation of an autonomous province needed the consent of the signatories of the Treaty of Berlin. The Triple Entente was being asked to accept an Italo-Austrian sphere of influence in what had been part of the Turkish Empire, and Russia's consent would be a very great concession. The least Austria could do would be to allow a Servian port at Medua. If she refused she must be told that Russia would make difficulties about Albania. A few days later he spoke of a possible alternative.<sup>1</sup> Albanian ports could be neutralised, so that Servian commerce might be on the same footing as that of all other countries, and access might be secured by an international railway. Grey no sooner expressed his satisfaction at the proposal than its author expressed doubt whether Servia would accept it. "It is very despairing having to deal with a man who is never of the same mind for two days in succession", wrote the exasperated British Ambassador.

Sazonoff's change of front struck the German no less than the British representative. He was more influenced by public opinion, reported Pourtalès, and more emphatic in the justification of Servian demands.<sup>2</sup> When the war began many influential Russians argued that, as the Balkan states had ignored Russian advice, they must take the consequences. Such talk was no longer heard, and Sazonoff admitted that Russia could not leave a Slav country in the lurch. The Ambassador no longer dismissed the idea of an Austro-Russian war. To complaints that Hartwig was making mischief in Belgrad his chief replied that his utterances were misreported. "He excuses everything because he is an accomplice", minuted the Kaiser on his Ambassador's report; "he is drifting." The despatches of the Austrian Ambassador point a similar picture of weakness.<sup>3</sup>

The Foreign Minister resented the charge that he had changed his mind. His aim throughout, he explained to Pourtalès, had been the creation of conditions in the Balkans which would last. This involved the realisation of Servia's legitimate wishes, and one of his chief objects was "the emancipation of Servia." He distinguished between her *amour-*

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, 200-1, 227-8.

<sup>2</sup> *G.P.* XXXIII 384-8.

<sup>3</sup> *A.* IV, 965-8.

*propre* and her vital interests, and he was ready to sacrifice the former for the latter. It was mean of Austria to grudge her a corridor. Yet if she would satisfy Servia's wishes for an outlet in another manner, he would be content on condition that the latter should have unfettered use of a neutral harbour. When the Ambassador interjected that he would have to exert all his influence to procure Servia's acceptance, Sazonoff replied that he had spoken very plainly at Belgrad. "But are you quite certain that all your instructions are carried out?" queried Pourtalès. The Foreign Minister admitted that Hartwig was passionately Slavophil and indeed could not be anything else. "A man with the name of Hartwig is always more Slavophil than a man with the name of Sazonoff." Never before had he criticised his unruly subordinate to the German Ambassador, and about the same time he remarked to the Italian Ambassador: *Soyez tranquille, nous le tenons en main*. The Minister, concluded Pourtalès, had always tried to swim against the Panslav stream, though he was denounced as a traitor to the holiest traditions of Russia. Germany had every reason to support him, for a better Minister from the German point of view could not be found. Rather than pursue a war-like policy he would probably resign. To the Austrian Minister he had said: You may be sure we shall not attack, provided you do not attack Servia. From Kokovtsov's Memoirs we learn that he helped to prevent the mad scheme of mobilisation in the south for which Sukhomlinoff, Minister of War, had secured the approval of the Tsar.<sup>1</sup>

When the first Balkan war ended with an armistice the interest shifted to London, where both the Peace Conference and the Ambassadors' Conference opened in the middle of December. Sazonoff's wishes in regard to the latter were set forth in an official telegram to Benckendorff.<sup>2</sup> The closest possible agreement with Paris and London should be reached in regard to pending questions, of which Albania and Servia's access to the sea were the most important. Russia's chief aim was to secure the latter's political and economic emancipation, avoiding the appearance of an Austro-Serb or Austro-Russian antagonism. Albania should become an autonomous province under the sovereignty of the Sultan, who might keep a few troops there; the frontiers could be fixed later, and no Power should enjoy special influence. Servia should have direct and unfettered communication on all railways to Albanian ports.

<sup>1</sup> Kokovtsov, *Out of My Past*, 344-8.

<sup>2</sup> Benckendorff, II, 524-6, 529-35.

Russia's attitude towards the boundaries of Albania would depend on Austria's readiness to meet Serbia's legitimate claims. A private letter added a few details. Austria's special position and interests must be considered, but any attempt on her part to secure a dominant or exclusive influence should be resisted. The Balkan states should be assisted to reap the maximum advantage from their victories. They should jointly demand territorial concessions which should afterwards be parcelled out. If Serbia did not realise her aims on the Adriatic, she must obtain valuable compensation elsewhere. She and Bulgaria should be urged to moderation. If Bulgars and Greeks could not agree about Salonica, it might become an international port. Roumania was slowly beginning to turn away from Austria, and Bulgaria should facilitate her conversion by ceding Silistria. After the opening of the Conference he added Montenegro's possession of Scutari to the list of demands for which he begged French and British support. Russia's guiding principles were to assist her *protégés* without risking war and to hold Austria in check.

If there was danger of war, it was to be found at Vienna or Belgrad. On December 10 the Servian Minister in St. Petersburg reported the fear that Austria was about to force his country to renounce her project of a port.<sup>1</sup> The communication acted like a cold *douche*. The Powers, wired Sazonoff to Belgrad, had decided to examine in common the questions raised by the war. Russia was ready to support the political and economic emancipation of Serbia, including access to the sea through Albanian territory with guarantees for the transport of military material as well as commercial goods. She was also ready to insist on a small Albania, but it was impossible for Serbia to secure sovereign rights over a portion of the coast. She must consent to accept the joint decisions of Russia, France and England. "Neither we nor our friends can allow the Servian Government to decide whether there shall be a European war. We believe that the best way to avoid complications is a prompt declaration that Serbia will bow to the advice of the Entente Powers in regard to access to the sea. In this way she would avert the danger of an Austrian ultimatum." The following day Novakovitch, the Servian Foreign Minister, dutifully declared that the decision of the Entente Powers would be obeyed.

Buchanan wrote hopefully on the improvement of the

<sup>1</sup> *Iswolsky*, II, 381-2, 385



situation.<sup>1</sup> Sazonoff had approved the meeting of the Ambassadors, and had persuaded Serbia to leave the question of access to the Adriatic in the hands of the Powers. He now calmly accepted what a few weeks before would have aroused his wrath. Even Austria's military preparations did not appear to alarm him. This unnatural calm was very difficult to explain. Probably he was acting under the express orders of the Tsar. Yet soft answers might not only turn away wrath. They might also foster the delusion that Russia was so wedded to peace that she would put up with anything which Austria, supported by Germany, might do. Sazonoff's consent to a purely commercial access to the Adriatic was denounced by a section of the Russian press as a triumph for Austria comparable to the humiliation of 1909, and Iswolsky reported the surprise of Paris at his passivity. Such complaints rendered it difficult to give way further, and at the turn of the year he stiffened his back. Austria was informed that, if mobilisation continued, Russia would be obliged to take serious measures in self-defence and time-expired reservists would be retained. Austria's explanation that she was not mobilising, but merely bringing her peace effectives up to the Russian level, failed to satisfy the Government, which kept the reservists with the colours. At this moment a new apple of discord appeared in Montenegro's claim to Scutari, which was supported in the interest not only of the Montenegrin dynasty but of Russian prestige. The tide of anti-Austrian feeling was mounting high.

Sazonoff's hopes of keeping the peace centred in Berlin. A war with Germany, he remarked to the German Chargé at the opening of 1913, seemed to him impossible.<sup>2</sup> If Germany remained the controlling factor in the Triple Alliance, he would have no fear for the future. No sensible Frenchman thought of a war with Germany: *Ces gens ne pensent qu'à leur argent*. Russia was increasing her military preparedness only because Austrian papers had threatened to destroy Serbia, which she naturally would not permit. To Buchanan he complained that Austria seemed to be taking the lead in the Triple Alliance, and it was there that the danger lay. Yet he was as anxious as ever to avoid a conflict. He attached great importance to the assignment of Scutari to Montenegro, he telegraphed to Benckendorff, because it was very undesirable to make further

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* IX, part II, 275-7, 313-4.

<sup>2</sup> *G.P.* XXXIV, 163-4.

concessions to Austria ; yet Russia did not wish to push the question beyond the diplomatic stage.

## VI

Enver's *coup* on January 23, 1913, filled Sazonoff with alarm, for the return of the Young Turks destroyed the slender chances of peace. The ultimate result of the conflict was not in doubt, and it was merely a question of time when Adrianople, Scutari and Jannina would fall. The resumption of hostilities made little difference in the relations between St. Petersburg and Vienna. Both players held strong cards. Since Bulgaria no longer threatened Constantinople, Russia could concentrate her attention on the Adriatic ; and the selection of Delcassé to succeed Georges Louis as French Ambassador at St. Petersburg, combined with the election of Poincaré as President of the Republic, emphasised the vitality of the alliance. Austria, for her part, could for once count on the support of Italy, at any rate to the extent of keeping Servia off the Adriatic. The tension would have been even more acute had not England and Germany zealously collaborated in the pursuit of peace.

The diplomatic struggle between the Eastern Empires in the opening months of 1913 hinged on the frontiers of the new Albania. Having accepted the Austrian veto on a Servian port, and being unwilling to fight for Montenegrin claims to Scutari, Russia had to make a firm stand for Servia's remaining demands. "Our public opinion", wired Sazonoff in appealing for Grey's support, "does not understand the reasons for all the sacrifices imposed on our brethren in the faith."<sup>1</sup> The Cabinets of London and Paris should realise the danger that we may be dragged by public opinion into other paths. People are asking whether the Government is as well supported by its allies and friends as is the case with Austria. Convinced as we are of the necessity for complete agreement and the closest solidarity between the Entente Powers, we feel bound to call the attention of the Cabinets of London and Paris to this extremely important question. Assure Grey of our firm desire to avoid all unilateral action. The best method of preventing complications would be a more vigorous diplomatic support by our friends." Though he realised Grey's loyalty to the Entente, he was often dissatisfied with his quasi-

<sup>1</sup> *Iswolsky*, III, 57-8, February 4.

judicial attitude. He was now as angry and excited as any journalist. "His tone in speaking of Austria", reported Pourtalès, "becomes ever more passionate."<sup>1</sup> He seizes every opportunity of launching the gravest accusations against the Austrian Government, and his profound distrust of the plans of the Hapsburg Monarchy knows no limits." Though sincerely anxious to avoid war, he would struggle for every foot of Slav soil for his Slav brethren as if it were a vital Russian interest.

On February 4 Prince Gottfried Hohenlohe, formerly Austrian Military Attaché at St. Petersburg and a *persona grata* at Court, brought the Tsar a friendly letter from Francis Joseph. The Tsar's reply was equally friendly and equally lacking in detail. Sazonoff pointed out to the Prince that Russia could not be indifferent to the fortunes of the Balkan Slavs and was bound to help them to their reward. She recognised, however, Austria's special interests in the Adriatic, and for that reason she had yielded on the Servian port. After this sacrifice, and in view of Servia's correct attitude, Russia had expected some reduction of Austrian armaments. Prince Hohenlohe replied that, judging by the Servian press, she might proceed to provocative acts, and that Austria must neglect no precautions. The mission was a pacific gesture; but the envoy had no authority to discuss the questions at issue, and the tension increased during the following weeks. If Scutari were to fall, Russia could not watch unmoved an Austrian attempt to evict King Nicholas. There were also fears that Roumania might seize Silistria, and the rival claims to Dibra and Djakova seemed impossible to adjust.

Of all the issues that of the Serb-Albanian frontier was the most inflammable. On February 20 Buchanan was informed that Russia could not accept the exclusion of Djakova and Dibra from Servian territory.<sup>2</sup> Sazonoff hoped that he might count on the support of France and England. At the same moment Servia announced that under no circumstances would she withdraw her troops from those towns. The situation was slightly eased by Austria's intimation that she would yield on Dibra if the rest of the Austrian line were accepted. Grey vainly pressed her to yield on both. Russia, declared Sazonoff, could not consent to hand over to a Mussulman Albania towns like Dibra and Djakova where there were Slav religious institutions. Moreover Servia would not evacuate them, and

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIV, 306-8.

<sup>2</sup> G. and T. IX, part II, 513, 521-2.

Russia could not force her. When Buchanan inquired whether he could suggest some other concession to induce Austria to give them up, he replied in the negative. In that case, rejoined the Ambassador, the Conference would break down and what would then happen? Germany and Austria, replied Sazonoff, would have to find some way out of the difficulty. The latter, he hoped, would not be mad enough to provoke a war for a town of no importance to herself. Russia had made all the concessions she could. He could not believe that Austria would venture to expel the Servians by force. If she did, Russia would fight. The Foreign Minister, reported Buchanan, was calm but determined. The decision, however, would depend on the Tsar.

The situation had become so tense that Grey suggested an international commission to examine the question of Djakova, and Sazonoff confided to Pourtalès that, if he could follow his personal inclinations, he would resign.<sup>1</sup> A fortnight later it was announced that Austria was reducing her forces on the Galician frontier and that Russia would release her reservists. A little later came the still more joyful tidings that Berchtold conceded Djakova, on condition that the Austrian plan for the northern frontiers of Albania was accepted by the Powers, and that the rapid evacuation by Serbia and Montenegro of the territories allotted to the new State should be demanded and secured by the Powers. It was a notable victory for Sazonoff, who had boldly faced the risk of an unwanted war.

No sooner was Djakova out of the way than the Scutari problem cast its dark shadow over the scene. On March 31 a circular telegram was despatched from St. Petersburg, inspired by the announcement that King Nicholas had ordered a general assault.<sup>2</sup> Under these circumstances the Foreign Minister consented to an immediate and joint naval demonstration, preferably by the blockade of Antivari, though, having no warships in the Mediterranean, Russia could not take part. The submission of King Nicholas to the demands of the Powers, he suggested, should be facilitated by a promise of money. This was as far as a Russian statesman could go, and it appeared to open up a way of peace. Yet Russia's refusal to join in the blockade, as every one knew, was not due to the lack of available ships, and the policy of abstention proved infectious. France disliked the notion of taking part in coercive measures in Eastern Europe without her ally; and Pichon suggested

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIV, 470-2, March 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Iswolsky*, III, 112.

that Austria and England, as representatives of the two diplomatic groups, might be charged by the other Powers to do the work.

Two days after his circular telegram Sazonoff confided his anxieties to the British and French Ambassadors. The situation was becoming most serious. Scutari might fall at any moment. Austrian ships were on the way to the Montenegrin coast, whereas Italy had refused to send her vessels, and France and England were hesitating. England, replied Buchanan, was only waiting for the participation of France. If she acted with Austria alone, she would be accused of joining with the Triple Alliance and would thereby damage Anglo-Russian relations. Austria, rejoined Sazonoff, must not be allowed to act alone: if she did, he could not answer for the consequences. The English flag might save the situation. To the French Ambassador he was even more explicit: "Tell your Government that we beseech them to send their ships." There was not a moment to lose, for an untoward incident might occur at any moment. If Austria were to attack transports with Servian reinforcements on board, war could hardly be averted.

It was a paradoxical situation for Russia to demand action in the Balkans by her friends while herself standing aloof. Buchanan inquired what she would do if a naval demonstration failed and Austria proceeded to further measures of coercion. Scutari, replied the Foreign Minister, was not of sufficient interest to Russia to justify a war. He realised that it was a vital question for Austria, and he would not protest if she took action. It must, however, be restricted to Scutari and should not extend to Servia, even if as Montenegro's ally she offered resistance to Austrian troops sent to that town. If Austria threatened Belgrad, war would be inevitable. He proposed to prepare public opinion for some action by Austria through a statement that Montenegro had broken her engagements by commencing war without Russia's permission and ignoring her advice. The Emperor, he added, was very angry with King Nicholas, and had remarked on the previous day that he must be left to his fate. "M. Sazonoff's attitude as regards Scutari is perplexing", minuted Nicolson on the report. "He certainly always gave us to understand that separate action by Austria would lead to the gravest consequences, and urged strenuously that we and France should therefore lose no time in taking part in the naval demonstration. Now he is quite

ready to admit Austria taking action against Montenegro. He would have preserved us all from considerable anxiety if he had let us know this earlier." Nicolson's annoyance was intelligible but a little unfair. Sazonoff was the servant of the Tsar, not the captain of the ship. Moreover there was a difference between Serbia and Montenegro. The loyalty of King Peter to his Imperial patron was beyond cavil; but who could answer for King Nicholas, the man of many wiles? The Foreign Minister had a difficult part to play, and he sometimes complained to the French Ambassador of the attacks of his critics.<sup>1</sup> "The war party", he remarked on April 10 "would like Hartwig in my place. But if I went, Giers would succeed me, and they would gain nothing." "But you are not going?" inquired Delcassé. "I should like to go", replied Sazonoff, "but at present there is no question of it."

The blockade of the Montenegrin coast, half-hearted though it was, persuaded Serbia to withdraw her troops from Scutari; but a few days later, on April 23, the fortress surrendered to King Nicholas. Austria promptly announced that the Powers must act, preferably by the occupation or bombardment of Montenegrin ports: if not, she would enforce the evacuation of Scutari. Sazonoff was far less perturbed than he would have been a month before. Austria, he remarked to Buchanan, might take some military action.<sup>2</sup> Even collective coercion would arouse Russian opinion, though the Government would probably be able to control it. King Nicholas, he believed, would surrender Scutari in return for some small territorial compensation in the neighbourhood. Before using force the Powers should exhaust all means of pressure. He might be threatened with a financial boycott if he remained intransigent, or tempted to yield by promises of financial support. If coercion had finally to be applied, he hoped that other Powers besides Austria would take part. A few shots would supply the King with an excuse for surrender. Buchanan felt that the Foreign Minister was again inclined to under-estimate the strength of Russian opinion, and feared that, if isolated Austrian action led to the shedding of blood, it might get out of control. The Emperor had ordered him to be patient, declared Sazonoff to the Ambassador, and he could not say what the Russian Government would decide to do. They were most anxious to avoid being dragged into a war.

<sup>1</sup> *D.D.F.* V, 309.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T.* IX, part II, 711, 719-20, 724-5, 747-8.

They were not afraid of Austria ; but Germany had also to be reckoned with, and England's attitude was unpredictable. Moreover they did not wish to endanger the results achieved by the Balkan states, which would gain strength from year to year while that of Austria would wane. It was not therefore Russia's interest to precipitate a conflict. If Austrian action was confined to securing the evacuation of Scutari, he believed that they could control public opinion. If it went further he could not answer for the results.

When the crisis was at its height, the joyful news arrived on May 4 that King Nicholas had placed the fate of the town in the hands of the Powers. To no one was it a greater relief than to Sazonoff. The decision, he remarked to the German Ambassador, was a great step forward towards peace, but he would feel far more confident if Austria's policy did not fill him with distrust.<sup>1</sup> He was convinced that she would spring some fresh surprise on Europe. The Minister, commented Pourtalès, expressed the general mood. Deep distrust and intense embitterment against Austria were universal. Even in circles far removed from the Panslav hotheads the question was asked whether Russia had not given way too much. The Kaiser minuted on this despatch: "The struggle between Slavs and Germans is inevitable. When? We shall see."

A week later Pourtalès found the Minister in more cheerful mood. There were still many difficulties to overcome, he remarked, but they were not dangerous. The *détente* was fostered by the visit of the Tsar to Berlin for the marriage of the Kaiser's daughter, and a few days later, on May 30, the second Balkan war ended with the signature in London of a treaty of peace. Two thorny territorial questions which remained unsettled—the southern boundary of Albania and the ownership of the Aegean islands—were not of vital importance either to Russia or Austria. "If the crisis has found a happy ending", observed Pichon to Iswolsky, "and Europe has not been plunged into a general war, we owe it exclusively to Russia, to her unselfishness and her readiness to go to the utmost limits of compromise compatible with her tradition, her interests and her dignity".<sup>2</sup> The compliment was excessive, for other statesmen had also striven for peace. Sazonoff himself pays tribute in his Memoirs to the unfailing support both of Kokovtsoff and the Tsar. Yet it is true enough that he played on the whole a moderating part. If Hartwig had taken his

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIV, 810-11.

Iswolsky, III, 150-3, May 8.

place, as the Panslavs demanded, the storm would probably have burst in 1913.

## VII

As the cessation of the Tripoli war was due to the outbreak of the Balkan conflict, so the inflammable Balkan states made peace with Turkey in order to turn their swords against each other's throats. In May, 1913, the probability of a quarrel over the spoils became almost a certainty. As patron of the Balkan League Sazonoff informed the Governments at Sofia and Belgrad of the anxiety which their differences were causing him, and suggested that the time had come for Russian arbitration. Bulgaria formally invited him to act, and he accepted the disagreeable task.<sup>1</sup> "If we do not decline it is solely in the interests of peace, and in order to strengthen an alliance the renewal of which we make the condition of our arbitration." Russia must also be sure that both parties would accept her award. Since the pressure of the army chiefs constituted the chief obstacle to a settlement, simultaneous reduction of armaments should immediately follow the signing of the peace treaty with Turkey. While it was Russia's business to deal with the Bulgar-Serb dispute, the Greco-Bulgar difference should be submitted to the Entente Powers in London or Paris. The French Government was implored to help in the matter, but Pichon preferred that the Triple Alliance should be asked to undertake the task. Neither proposal was adopted, and Sazonoff learned for the second time that it is easier to light a fuse than to put it out.

The Foreign Minister played his last card on June 8 when he persuaded the Tsar to send an identical telegram to King Ferdinand and King Peter.<sup>2</sup> "At such a grave moment I make a direct appeal to Your Majesty in accordance with my duty and my right. It is to Russia that the two peoples, Bulgars and Serbs, have referred by their treaty of alliance the decision of every difference relating to the application of its terms. I therefore urge Your Majesty to remain faithful to your obligations and to submit to Russia the solution of the present dispute. Considering the functions of an arbitrator not as a prerogative but as a painful obligation which I cannot shirk, I feel it my duty to warn Your Majesty that a war between the allies could not leave me indifferent. I declare

<sup>1</sup> *Iswolsky*, III, 159-60.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T.* IX part II, 847-8.



that the state which commences it would be responsible to the Slav cause, and that I reserve full liberty of action as regards the results of such a criminal strife." The language was strong, but not strong enough for its purpose. Sazonoff was criticised for compromising his master's prestige, and the implied claim to control the policy of the Balkan states was sharply resented in Vienna and Budapest. Tisza's resounding declaration that their independence must not be limited by Russia was equally distasteful to St. Petersburg. The Imperial telegram which had endeavoured to pour oil on the troubled waters merely served to increase the fury of the storm.

On June 21 Sazonoff observed to Prince Nicholas of Greece that Russia had exhausted all means of pressure, and that they were on the eve of war.<sup>1</sup> Bulgaria declined arbitration except on the basis of the treaty, a condition which Belgrad refused to accept. He told the Bulgarian Minister that, since his country was acting as a traitor to the Slav cause, Russia formally denounced the treaty of 1902 which promised support in the event of a Roumanian attack. Nothing could be done except to localise the struggle. Roumania would probably occupy a strip of territory which Bulgaria might agree to cede. If, however, she joined forces with Greece and Servia, he would not be sorry. In neither case would Russia intervene. When Buchanan hinted at the risk of driving Bulgaria into Austria's arms, he replied that there was little danger, for she would not go too far and would ultimately have to return. The British Ambassador doubted whether the Foreign Minister's policy was generally approved in Russia, where the Bulgar claim to Macedonia was held to be just.

On June 29 Bulgaria attacked her Serb and Greek Allies. There was never a thought of intervention in the fratricidal strife, and Sazonoff confessed to Buchanan that Russia was powerless to exercise pressure either at Sofia or Belgrad.<sup>2</sup> To the Austrian Ambassador he spoke with unaccustomed warmth of Berchtold's moderation throughout the prolonged Balkan crisis.<sup>3</sup> The revelation of Bulgarian ambitions in Constantinople in the autumn of 1912 had cooled an historic friendship, and the rejection of his advice in the summer of 1913 completed the breach. The *protégé* and the patron were equally angry with one another. Henceforth Bulgaria gravitated towards the Central Powers, while Russian diplomacy concentrated on Belgrad and Bucharest. Yet there were

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. IX*, part II, 860-1, 867-9. <sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 884-5, 895-9. <sup>3</sup> *A. VI*, 934-8.

limits to the Foreign Minister's championship of the Serb cause. While very anti-Bulgarian in his language, reported Buchanan, he believed and hoped that Bulgaria would win, since the victory of Servia would lead to international complications. On the other hand Bulgaria must not become too powerful. When she clamoured for Russian mediation he replied that she had placed herself entirely in the wrong, and that she had better make the best terms she could with Athens and Belgrad. On July 9 he sent a circular telegram to the Balkan capitals urging an immediate armistice and a meeting of representatives in St. Petersburg to establish the basis of peace. Any state declining the invitation would lose all hope of Russian support. Once again the appeal fell on deaf ears.

Bulgaria's extremity was her neighbour's opportunity. The Roumanians seized the coveted territory which Bulgaria, despite months of negotiations in the Ambassadors' Conference at St. Petersburg, had declined to yield. More unexpected was the rush of the Young Turks on Adrianople, which the Bulgarians, beset on three sides, were unable to defend. Against Roumania's intervention Sazonoff had nothing to say, for his reiterated warnings to buy off a potential foe were ignored. Enver's daring raid was another matter. In dealing with the decisions of the Ambassadors' Conference concerning the boundaries of Albania he had shown no zeal, for they ran counter to Serb and Montenegrin claims. When, on the other hand, it was a question of Turkey recovering lost property, he re-emerged as patron of the Balkan Christians. It was an old principle of Russian policy, he explained to the German Ambassador, that territory occupied by Christians and once freed from the Turkish yoke should never go back.

After vainly summoning Turkey to keep within the Enos-Midia line Sazonoff proposed a declaration by the Powers that their decisions must be upheld, with a naval demonstration to follow in the event of an ambiguous reply.<sup>1</sup> When Germany declined to collaborate, he suggested that the Triple Entente should act. Here too he was rebuffed, for Pichon pointed out that if the Entente Powers, or worse still Russia alone, took separate action, the Central Powers might follow suit. His attitude, replied Iswolsky, would produce a most painful impression in St. Petersburg, especially at a time when the dignity and the historical traditions of Russia were at stake. On the following day Pichon made a slight advance. If

<sup>1</sup> *Iswolsky*, III, 207-15.

Russia and Austria agreed in desiring to prevent the collapse of Bulgaria, Russia's action against Turkey in order to impose the will of Europe need not cause complications. First of all, however, she should obtain the consent of Germany. He would prefer action against Constantinople or a landing on some part of the Black Sea coast to a movement in Armenia, which would be the greatest danger of all. France, he concluded, was not indifferent to Russian interests in the Balkans; he merely wished to avert a general war. It was all in vain, for the conflict was quickly over and Europe was weary of the strife.

Adrianople remained in Turkish hands, and the effort to save Cavalla for Bulgaria was equally unsuccessful. The Greeks had Salonica, argued Sazonoff, and the Bulgarians needed a port on the Aegean.<sup>1</sup> But he was also thinking of Russia's interest that Greece should not approach the Dardanelles. When the Peace Conference at Bucharest adjudged it to Greece, he telegraphed that the decision must be revised. Pichon, however, once again had ideas of his own. France was traditionally Philhellene and had little interest in Bulgaria. The Greeks, he pointed out, were determined to keep Cavalla; if Bulgaria had refused to yield, the war would have recommenced and Sofia would have been occupied. "In this affair", wrote Iswolsky, "the French Government has separated itself from us with open eyes and has worked not only passively but actively for the Greek solution." Sazonoff was equally annoyed at the independent attitude of his ally. "It has been growing ever more difficult", he wired to Paris, "to reply to the questions and doubts of the press and society, where the chronic lack of harmony between us and our ally in questions which are much more vital to us than to her is noted." Iswolsky loyally endeavoured to win the Quai d'Orsay for the official policy, though he was not persuaded of its wisdom. He confided to his chief that he could not understand the extreme importance attached to Cavalla, which was not a natural harbour, or to Adrianople, which Bulgaria had forfeited by her mistakes.

Sazonoff's efforts to rescue Adrianople and Cavalla were outweighed in Bulgarian eyes by his refusal to stop Roumania's advance. Since his predominant concern throughout the three Balkan wars was to limit Austrian influence in the Near East, and since Bulgaria was Austria's chosen instrument for

<sup>1</sup> *Iswolsky*, III, 221-3, 233-7.

checking the hegemony of Serbia, he welcomed King Carol's decision to throw his sword into the scale. Without his intervention Bulgaria might defeat her foes; with it, she lost all chance of victory. The waning of Russian influence at Sofia might be made good by the smiles of Bucharest. While Berchtold was planning to reconcile Bulgaria with Roumania, Sazonoff was striving to draw them apart. Buchanan, indeed, believed that he had indirectly encouraged Carol to march, and that, so long as Austria did not intervene, he did not care how much territory Bulgaria might have to cede to Roumania and Serbia. Russia's interests, however, he felt, would be best served if none of the Balkan states were too strong or too weak. When Bulgaria was beaten to her knees and the peace negotiations opened at Bucharest on July 30, he told her that she must sign whatever settlement was imposed on her, and trust to the Powers to revise it later on. He had now become a strong Bulgarophil, he confessed to Buchanan, and a violent anti-Hellenist. But Russian influence counted for nothing in the making of the peace. The Treaty of Bucharest, signed on August 10, 1913, ended one of the shortest and fiercest conflicts in modern history. Yet everyone recognised that it was merely a truce, for Bulgaria was certain to try her luck again.

Sazonoff had little cause for satisfaction as he surveyed his most recent performances, for he had failed in almost everything he undertook. In vain did he attempt to avert the war, to bring the Premiers to St. Petersburg, to stop the struggle, to save Cavalla and Adrianople for Bulgaria, to persuade the Powers or even the Triple Entente to keep Turkey within bounds. His wish for a Conference of the Powers in Paris to ratify changes in the Treaty of Berlin remained unfulfilled. That the prestige of Russia had suffered under these rebuffs was undeniable, and his clumsy handling of the situation was criticised in Paris and London. Nobody knew, complained Nicolson, what he would do from day to day. Yet there was one clear and significant gain. By his support of Roumania's ambitions he accelerated her move from the Austrian towards the Russian camp.

Iswolsky greeted the settlement with something like enthusiasm.<sup>1</sup> He could not understand Russian dissatisfaction, he wrote to his chief. Deplorable as it was from the humanitarian point of view, the conflict had relieved Russia of the impossible

<sup>1</sup> *Iswolsky*, III, 240-4.

task of dividing Macedonia between the allies. Sazonoff's masterpiece, he continued, was his separation of Roumania from Austria. Bulgaria's losses did not affect her vital interests, and Cavalla was unimportant. It was said that the treaty would lead to a new war for Macedonia. But, if Bulgaria had triumphed, Servia and Greece would have hit back in a few years. Revision was needless, for the treaty was hostile not to Russian but to Austrian interests. By unleashing the civil war Austria had striven to weaken Servia, who had emerged with a moral and material increase of strength. Austria stood alone, and even Germany turned away from her impossible policy. Revision might enable her to regain something of what she had lost. "Forgive me for being so frank", he concluded. "I live in a purer atmosphere than you, and one can see many things more clearly from outside." On this occasion, at any rate, the Ambassador was the better judge.

A lull of exhaustion followed the Treaty of Bucharest. The Tsar, reported the British Chargé on October 1, adhered strictly to the declaration in his telegram to the Balkan sovereigns on the eve of the third Balkan war, namely that the state which commenced hostilities would forfeit his support.<sup>1</sup> His attitude to King Nicholas was no less chilly than to King Ferdinand, for he had ignored Russian advice during the Scutari crisis. The supplies which used to flow to Cetinje were discontinued. This attitude, commented O'Beirne, was convenient for Russia, for it soothed her sense of dignity, and relieved her of the necessity of displaying energy on behalf of her former *protégés*. Even Servia was soon to learn that her stock had fallen fast and far.

After a year of crises Sazonoff was a tired man, and he took a long autumn holiday. Austria's ultimatum to Servia on October 18, demanding the evacuation of Albania within eight days, was launched when he had reached Paris on his way home from Vichy.<sup>2</sup> Fearing that something of the sort might occur, he and Pichon had vainly urged the Servian Government to follow Russian and French advice without waiting for threats. While Pasitch and Hartwig were furious, Sazonoff kept his head. "I was a witness", he wrote in his report to the Tsar on his journey, "of the unqualified disapproval of Austria's step by the French Government and people, and I seized the favourable moment to persuade Pichon to recognise the wisdom shown by Servia. I suggested that France had an

<sup>1</sup> G. and T. X, part I, 279.

<sup>2</sup> *Iswolsky*, III, 328-31.

interest in strengthening her, since in the event of grave international conflicts the enemy of Germany's ally would inevitably be on the French side. Pichon promised his support for the speedy issue of a Servian loan." In Berlin, where he spent a few hours, he blamed Austria's action and found no disposition to approve it.<sup>1</sup> On his return he confessed to the German Ambassador that her policy of surprises caused him continual anxiety. So long as she consulted Germany before taking an important decision he was not in the least alarmed; but she always presented them with a *fait accompli* which they had to accept.

To the British Chargé Sazonoff admitted that Servia had been more to blame than was generally supposed in the events which led to the ultimatum.<sup>2</sup> Imprudent language had been used at Belgrad as to combining with Essad Pasha to crush the new Albanian Government, and Neratoff, the interim Foreign Minister, had intimated that such utterances would make it impossible for Russia to give Servia support. O'Beirne was struck by the perfect indifference in St. Petersburg to her interests. Though Berchtold's rough methods had been condemned, not a single paper had suggested action. Before the Balkan wars an eight days ultimatum would have led to an explosion. That Austrian aggression against a Slav state would of necessity bring Russia into the field was no longer an axiom. Any state, on the other hand, which seemed likely to menace Constantinople would be watched as jealously as ever. It was a shrewd forecast. On the very day that this despatch was written, the British Ambassador at Constantinople telegraphed to London that a German Military Mission with extensive powers would be sent to the Turkish capital.

## VIII

The sweeping victories of the Balkan Allies revealed the need of military reorganisation in Turkey, and turned the thoughts of her rulers to Berlin. Germany coveted no Turkish territory, and the memory of the services of General von der Goltz after similar misfortunes a generation before was still fresh. No one had a right to be surprised at the acceptance of the appeal for help, all the more since a British Admiral was reforming the fleet. The Kaiser vaguely informed the Tsar on the occasion of the marriage of his daughter in May

<sup>1</sup> cp. G.P. XXXVI, 410-2, 420-1.

<sup>2</sup> G. and T. X, part I, 52-4.

1913, and no objection was raised. When, however, the extent of the powers entrusted to the German Mission became known, the wrathful alarm of Russia knew no bounds.<sup>1</sup> On November 7 Sazonoff's assistant, Neratoff, informed the German Chargé that he heard that a large number of high German officers were about to enter the Turkish service in order to re-organise the army and in particular the garrison of Constantinople. A model division on the German pattern and under the command of a German General was to be created in the capital. The training of provincial troops would not have disturbed him, but here was a measure which Russia could only regard as directed against herself. Everything which concerned Constantinople and the Straits was of the greatest importance for her.

Neratoff's anxieties were not removed by the argument that Turkey would never dream of aggression against Russia, and that the powerful Russian army could not be threatened even by a model division in Constantinople. Ten days later, on returning from the Crimea, Sazonoff reiterated his assistant's complaints in what he describes as a rather stormy interview. The affair, he contended, was not military but political. Russo-German relations had never been better, and therefore Germany could beg the Turks that, in order not to offend her old friends the Russians, they should not place troops under a German General in Constantinople. Nothing had been said during his recent visit to Berlin. Was it really intended to place the whole or part of the First Turkish Army Corps under the General? How would Germany like to see a Belgian army corps under a French General? He had no confidence in the Young Turks, and Turkish megalomania should not be encouraged. German officers could work in the provinces. The stationing of a Mission in Constantinople, like the permanent presence of the General, was a complete novelty. He was eager to be on friendly terms with Germany, but this rendered his task very difficult. Kokovtsoff, who happened to be in Berlin at this moment, begged Bethmann to transfer the General to Adrianople. The Chancellor promised that Liman should examine whether removal from the capital was possible. The decision on the General's residence, commented Sazonoff, should not be left to him, for it was an

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXVIII, ch. 290; G. and T. X, part I, ch. 87; Sazonoff, *Six Fateful Years*, ch. 6; *Die Europäischen Mächte u. die Türkei*, I, ch. 3; R. J. Kerner, *Slavonic Review*, June and December 1927, March and June 1928.

eminently political question. There were many ways of meeting Russia's legitimate wishes.

On November 25 the Foreign Minister asked his friends in the west for moral support. He had explained to Germany how difficult it would be for Russia to have her Embassy in a capital with a German garrison, though she could accept officers in Asia Minor not too close to her frontier. The German Government had made no satisfactory reply. If it were thought undesirable to make further representations in Berlin, perhaps the Entente Powers could jointly inform the Porte that the privileged position assigned to Germany raised the question of compensations. He had received the news of the intended arrangement while staying at Livadia with the Tsar, who had been greatly displeased and had asked why nothing had been said when he passed through Berlin. The German military authorities, he believed, had settled the matter without consulting the Chancellor. The Turkish capital would now be in the hands of the German Commander, and the Embassies would depend on him for protection, which was not very dignified. As a *solatium* Russia might perhaps demand the appointment of Russian officers in Armenia, while England could propose the employment of British officials in Asia Minor. He had not made up his mind what to do. "When one thinks what Constantinople means to Russia," wrote O'Beirne to Nicolson, "it is certainly an intolerable thing for her to see the town virtually in the hands of a German Commander. But much as I sympathise with Sazonoff, his attitude seems to me to be one merely of impotent annoyance." France's response to the appeal was satisfactory, but he was disappointed by Grey's cautious reply. The situation was tense, for Bethmann declared that any concession would look like yielding to French and Russian threats.

The contention of Pourtalès that the Mission was unpolitical produced no effect in St. Petersburg. If the German General really received the command in Constantinople, declared Sazonoff, it would be a blow at Russo-German friendship from which it would not be easy to recover; for Germany would show that she cared more for Turkey than for Russia. Russia, and probably France and England as well, would have to ask for compensations. If each member of the Triple Entente claimed to command an army corps, it would be in effect the beginning of partition. He would not oppose a command at Adrianople, little as he liked it; but it was of the



highest importance for Russia that a German General should not command in the capital. His anger was increased by the publication of the terms of the appointment on December 5. For five years Liman was to be President of the Army Reform Commission, Commander of the First Army Corps in Constantinople, and member of the War Council. He had been told that the matter should be discussed on the spot, he exclaimed to Pourtalès, and here was the *fait accompli* ! For two hours the Minister and the Ambassador hurled their familiar arguments at one another. For Russia it was intolerable. If persisted in, she, probably in co-operation with France and England, would have to use very grave language in Constantinople. The German garrison would stimulate the arrogance and megalomania of the Young Turks to a point where they would become impossible.

The matter, declared Sazonoff to the British Chargé, would test the value of the Triple Entente. If the three Powers were resolute Germany, he believed, would climb down; but without the fear of the British fleet she might disregard the remonstrances of France and Russia. Grey approved an identic but not collective inquiry at Constantinople as to the exact nature of the contract, but beyond that he would not go. That a British Admiral possessed extensive powers over the Turkish fleet imposed caution. His reserve merely increased Sazonoff's excitement. It was impossible, he declared, for the Entente Powers to allow themselves to be defeated on this question. Germany might risk a conflict between the Triple and the Dual Alliance, but she would not face the British navy as well. If the representations of the three Powers at Constantinople failed, a financial boycott and a veto on the increase in the Turkish customs should follow, and the Ambassadors might be withdrawn. Russian mobilisation on the Armenian frontier would be impossible till the spring. If necessary England might occupy Smyrna, France Beirut, and Russia Trebizond. When O'Beirne reminded him that in such case Germany might have something to say, Sazonoff naïvely replied that Berlin need not regard the action of the Triple Entente as unfriendly.

Grey's refusal to go beyond a verbal inquiry at Constantinople nettled the Foreign Minister. As a result of constant diplomatic collaboration, reported O'Beirne, Russia had come to count on British support to an extent hardly contemplated when the Agreement was made in 1907. The German

Command in Constantinople was regarded as a matter of a different category from the issues affecting the Balkan states during the last eighteen months. This was the first question seriously involving Russian interests in which British support had been asked. Russian anxiety was in no way relieved by the answer to the identic inquiries of the three Ambassadors. The German General, replied the Grand Vizier, would command the First Army Corps and create model regiments through which the officers of other regiments would pass. He would have no authority over the Straits, nor would he have the command of Constantinople during a state of siege. The Triple Entente, declared Sazonoff to Buchanan, was stronger than the Triple Alliance, and had only to act firmly to carry the day. He did not believe that the Germans could make the Turkish army an efficient fighting force. It was the political aspect of the question which preoccupied him, for, with a German General in command of the troops, the German Ambassador would be a virtual dictator. Nothing was so likely to bring war as constantly proclaiming their fear of war. The impression had unfortunately gained ground that Russia would not fight.

At this moment, when the tension was at its height, Germany suggested that the Russian and German Military Attachés at Constantinople should seek an alternative solution. Sazonoff brought the good news to the British Embassy, and sent a message of gratitude to Grey for his efforts at Berlin. The crisis, however, was not over, as the Attachés failed to agree. A way out of the *impasse* was finally discovered in the promotion of Liman to a rank involving his transfer from the command of a single corps to the supervision of the whole army. Even now Sazonoff, unlike the Tsar and Kokovtsoff, was dissatisfied. How soon would the change occur, he asked the German Ambassador, and what would the Mission do if Turkey were at war? He seemed to think that Germany had merely confessed her offence. He had reached his immediate objective, but his victory brought him little satisfaction. The crisis seemed to bring a European conflagration appreciably nearer. For the increase of German influence on the Bosphorus was an ugly fact, and the prospective strengthening of the Turkish army was not at all to his taste. He had not abandoned his desire for good relations, reported Pourtalès, but he was weak and his health was bad. Yet Germany had no reason to desire a new pilot at the helm.

The revelation of Turkey's weakness and of Germany's preponderance at Constantinople turned Russian eyes once again to the Straits. In an elaborate Memorandum to the Tsar, dated December 8, 1913, the Foreign Minister analysed the unstable situation bequeathed by the Treaty of Bucharest.<sup>1</sup> The danger of a Bulgarian seizure of the capital had diminished, but that of a Greek naval attack had increased. Despite a flicker of success in the third Balkan war, Turkey had lost ground. All the Great Powers were reckoning with a dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, and were asking themselves how they could secure their interests in Asia Minor. Russia desired no territory and needed peace for her internal development. Whether she ought to strive for the possession of the Straits remained an open question, but she could never accept a solution contrary to her interests. If a strong Power held them, the whole economic life of South Russia would be under its control. Since the political consequences would be still more serious, her military and naval forces in the Black Sea must be prepared to prevent an occupation by any other Power. Bulgaria had been beaten, but she might try again. A temporary occupation had been considered at the time of the Armenian massacres, but the technical difficulties had been too great. Since then vast sums had been spent, but a landing operation remained impracticable. Indeed the situation was worse, for the Turkish fleet in the Black Sea would be superior to the Russian in the years 1914-1916. Such naval superiority Russia could not allow. Could her army and navy seize Constantinople and the Straits in case of need? Only if the mobilisation of an army corps was accelerated, communications developed, transport improved, and the Black Sea fleet enlarged.

"I reiterate my desire", concluded the Memorandum, "that the *status quo* should last as long as possible. I must also repeat that the question of the Straits can scarcely advance except through European complications. These would doubtless find us in league with France and probably with England. In the Balkans we could count on Servia and perhaps on Roumania. Here is the task of our diplomacy—to pave the way towards a close rapprochement with Roumania, whose position in the Balkans much resembles that of Italy in Europe. Both these Powers suffer from megalomania, and as they are not strong enough to carry out their plans openly, they

<sup>1</sup> *Iswolsky*, III, 374-83.

have to be content with a utilitarian policy, watching which side is the stronger." Serbia could only attain her lofty ideal of the union of the whole Serb people if Bulgaria did not oppose her, and indeed if she helped in return for Macedonia. Neither alternative, however, was practicable unless Russia at the same time strove to realise her own historic aims.

The Conference for which the Foreign Minister asked in order to discuss his proposals was held on January 13, 1914.<sup>1</sup> Its members were furnished with a list of theses drawn up by the Foreign Office, and the Liman Mission, which had not been mentioned in the Memorandum, was now the main theme.

1. Admitting that a German General might command Turkish troops, say at Adrianople, Russia could not allow the presence of a foreign General in command of troops at Constantinople.

2. The Foreign Office must continue negotiations on these lines in Berlin and Constantinople.

3. In view of the apparent duplicity of German policy in the matter, decisions must be taken in case Russia's demands required material support.

4. Such measures might include the occupation of some place in Asia Minor, such as Trebizond or Bajazet, with the announcement that it would continue till the demands were fulfilled.

5. The coercive measures decided upon must be discussed with England and France, for Russia must know if she could rely on corresponding steps by those Powers.

6. In these negotiations the three Powers must act with extreme caution and in complete unity, in order if possible to avert the sharpening of the conflict into a European war. But at the same time Russia must try to persuade France and England to persevere to the end in action undertaken in the common interest.

7. If the three Powers accept this standpoint, and if the negotiations in Berlin fail, a crescendo of pressure must be agreed upon, for instance a strict financial boycott of Turkey, then the recall of Ambassadors, and finally a time limit for the fulfilment of their demands.

8. Any military preparations for coercion, such as the increase of troops in the Caucasus, should be kept secret so far as possible.

<sup>1</sup> Stieve, *Iswolsky und der Weltkrieg*, 234-46.

Sazonoff opened the proceedings with a statement that Liman might give up his command in Constantinople, in which case the discussion would be academic. How far Russia could rely on effective support from England was uncertain. Delcassé, on the other hand, had promised that France would go as far as her ally desired. Energetic but cautious action by the three Powers, he believed, would not necessarily involve war with Germany, who would not regard action by Russia and France as particularly dangerous. In any case those two states could hardly strike her a mortal blow. If, however, England joined in, it might be disastrous for Germany, who knew that in such a case there might be an internal catastrophe within six weeks. Therefore before Russia took decisive steps she would have to make certain of English support. It was the weakness of Russian policy that this was not assured.

The conclusions of the Conference were summarised by its Chairman, Kokovtsoff, in four theses.

1. The opposition to a German General commanding in Constantinople should be maintained though general inspection of the Turkish army was admissible.

2. The negotiations with Berlin should continue till their failure was obvious.

3. In that event measures must be concerted with France and England.

4. Unless the active co-operation of both Powers was assured, Russia could not apply coercive methods which might lead to war with Germany.

Despite the liquidation of the Liman crisis by the surrender of Berlin, a second important Conference was held at St. Petersburg on February 21, with Sazonoff in the chair.<sup>1</sup> Grave political complications, he began, seemed improbable at the moment, but no one could be sure of the *status quo* in the Near East even in the immediate future. If the control of the Straits were to slip out of Turkey's hands, Russia could not allow any other Power on their shores, and might therefore be compelled to occupy them herself. The success of this operation would largely depend on rapidity, and would require troops as well as ships. He therefore begged for information on what had been done and what needed doing in regard to the accelerated mobilisation of an adequate landing force, the completion of the routes, the preparation of trans-

<sup>1</sup> Stieve, *Iswolsky und der Weltkrieg*, 247-66.

port, the building of railways in the Caucasus, and the organisation of a Black Sea fleet.

In the technical discussion which followed Sazonoff explained that the seizure of the Straits might involve Bulgaria and Greece, though, in view of their notorious enmity, not on the same side. Since operations against the Straits would hardly take place except in a European war, Servia would throw her entire forces against Austria. Roumania, though doubtless bound to Austria by a military agreement, had become so friendly that her intervention against Russia was by no means certain. Neither Germany nor Austria would be able to send troops to the Straits, and at the worst some Italians might land. At the suggestion of the Foreign Minister the Conference recommended all departments concerned to take the necessary technical measures for a possible seizure of the Straits. Neither in his November Memorandum nor in his utterances at the two Conferences is there a word to suggest that Sazonoff desired to attack Turkey or to provoke a European war. Yet the elaborate discussions which took place at his suggestion prove that during the last winter of peace he regarded a general conflict in the near future as not improbable. News of the meeting reached the German Embassy in an exaggerated form and was forwarded to Berlin. More than ever was it the task of Foreign Ministers to prepare for the worst.

## IX

The six months which elapsed between the end of the Liman crisis and the Serajevo murders witnessed three events of major importance for Russian diplomacy. The first was the outbreak of a bitter press feud with Germany. The second was the tightening of the ties with England. The third was the Imperial visit to Roumania. Despite the improvement in Anglo-German relations which had begun with the Haldane Mission, the European situation as a whole went from bad to worse. While the armament firms worked at high pressure, the Chancelleries strove to cement old friendships and to undermine the solidarity of hostile groups.

On March 2, 1914, the *Kölnische Zeitung* published an inflammatory communication from its St. Petersburg Correspondent.<sup>1</sup> Russia, he declared, was not yet prepared for war, but in 1917

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIX, ch. 299.

she would be ready. The Ambassador explained that he had not been consulted by the writer and disagreed with his conclusions. Sazonoff took the incident quietly. No one in Russia, he declared, seriously thought of an offensive war: her armaments were merely a symptom of the fever from which all Europe was suffering. *On se croit quelquefois dans une maison de fous.* Frank discussion of their respective complaints by the two Governments was essential. He confided to Pourtalès that he longed to resign: he had sounded the Tsar, but had received no encouragement. A newspaper article inspired by the War Office replied that the era of menaces was over, that in the event of war the Russian army would no longer be on the defensive, and that its technical equipment was thoroughly up to date. Russia, like its ruler, wished for peace, but was ready for the test. It was clear, reported the German Ambassador, that Sazonoff did not approve this pronouncement.

On June 13 an article appeared which was attributed to the Russian War Office and created no less excitement than that of March 2. Russia, it declared, had fulfilled every obligation of the alliance and naturally expected France to do the same. Foreign countries were well aware of her colossal efforts to fortify the Franco-Russian alliance. The reforms in the army were without precedent at home or abroad. The number of recruits and the length of service had been increased. The army, the biggest ever known, was 2,320,000 strong, and only mighty Russia could indulge in such a luxury. Germany had 880,000, Austria about 500,000, Italy about 400,000. Russians expected France to provide the 770,000 men which the Three Years service would yield. Russia had also planned and begun to build a network of strategic lines.<sup>1</sup> "We can repeat with a trifling modification what we said in the spring: Russia and France desire no war; but Russia is ready and hopes France will be ready too."

Sazonoff's main preoccupation during the last months of peace was to prepare the Triple Entente for the ordeal which the Liman incident seemed to him to bring within sight. To obtain loans for strategic railways was simple enough, but no one knew better than he that without British support Russia and France might go down before the Central Powers. Like

<sup>1</sup> Arrangements for a loan to develop Russia's strategic railways were made during Kokovtsov's visit to Paris in November 1913 and ratified in an exchange of letters between Sazonoff and Delcassé, December 30, 1913. D.D.F. VIII 881-4.

Iswolsky, he had always longed for more definite assurances than the British Cabinet felt able to give, and Grey's aloofness in the Liman crisis increased the uncertainty as to British action. Except for Persia, no regional difficulties marred the harmony of Anglo-Russian relations, but such negative consolation was not enough. His ideal was to transform the Triple Entente into an alliance. If a formula of consultation, similar to the Grey-Cambon declarations, was at the moment unattainable, perhaps a naval agreement might be made.

In a revealing letter to Benckendorff on February 19, 1914, Sazonoff confessed his discouragement at the weak and vacillating policy of England, and regretfully recognised the immense difficulty, if not the impossibility, of placing Anglo-Russian relations on a firmer basis.<sup>1</sup> A few Englishmen, including Buchanan, understood the situation, but Grey remained strangely blind. Peace would only be assured when the Triple Entente, whose existence was no more demonstrated than that of the Sea Serpent, was transformed into a defensive alliance without secret clauses and published by every newspaper in the world. On that day the danger of German hegemony would be removed, and the three Powers of the Triple Entente could devote themselves to their internal affairs in peace. Was it a dream? On the contrary it was a practical necessity. Yet the strange mentality of the English Radicals, who only wished to preserve some outworn prejudices of the past, barred the way. The same desire for more binding obligations on the part of England was expressed by the Tsar in receiving Paléologue, the new French Ambassador.

On March 18 Iswolsky reported the agreement of the French President and the Premier with the recent utterance of the Tsar.<sup>2</sup> The forthcoming visit of King George, they added, would be the time to discuss the matter. The road from St. Petersburg to London ran through Paris. Their view was shared by Sazonoff, who, in replying to his Ambassador, described the strengthening and development of the so-called Triple Entente, and if possible its transformation into a new Triple Alliance, as an urgent task. Such an alliance, which would fully secure the international position of Russia, France and England, would threaten no one since they did not aim at conquests, and would form the best foundation for European peace. Certain steps had already been taken between France and England to define their mutual obligations. Russia

<sup>1</sup> *Imperialismus*, I, 274-5.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, II, 32-4.



should proceed on the same path, and at the same time discuss other matters of common interest. Unfortunately the domestic situation in England claimed the whole attention of the Government and society, and consequently it was a bad time for delicate international commitments. "Yet I agree with your view that it might be useful if Poincaré and Doumergue took advantage of the meeting with King George and his Ministers, and confidentially suggested that a closer agreement between Russia and England would be welcomed in France as a happy event which would be equally desirable for all the members of the Triple Entente." The conditions of a political agreement would have to be discussed directly between St. Petersburg and London. But perhaps the French Government might propose to Grey to allow Russia to see the Anglo-French political agreement, which might provide a basis for a similar contact between Russia and England.

The royal visit to Paris produced the desired result. Iswolsky reported the good news to his chief, and paid tribute to Doumergue's energy and tact. The King, he added, had expressed his satisfaction at the proposal, and Grey was the sincerest friend of closer relations. Sazonoff sent a message of gratitude to Doumergue, and conveyed the news to his master in Livadia, who minuted: "Very important information." That the Russian navy had hardly begun to recover from the Japanese war, and that England was unlikely to send her vessels to the Baltic, was felt to be of secondary importance. What mattered was the political side of the transaction. The readiness of the English Government to begin the negotiations for a naval agreement, wrote Sazonoff to Benckendorff, had given the keenest satisfaction.<sup>1</sup> Apart from its intrinsic desirability, its general significance was very great as an important step towards the closer association of England with the Franco-Russian alliance. He enclosed the conclusions of a Conference at the Russian Admiralty. England should be urged to occupy the greatest possible portion of the German fleet in the North Sea in order to diminish its crushing superiority in the Baltic, and perhaps even to effect a landing in Pomerania. For the latter purpose Russia's transports were too few, and the despatch of some English merchantmen to her Baltic harbours before the beginning of hostilities would be very welcome. England could also help by leaving enough ships in the Mediterranean to preserve the supremacy of the

<sup>1</sup> *Imperialismus*, III, 95.

Entente navies, and by allowing Russian vessels to use English harbours in the Eastern portion, just as the naval agreement with France allowed the use of French harbours in the West. Every detail of co-operation should be worked out, and periodical meetings of the Chiefs of the Admiralty staffs should take place. The negotiations of Captain Wolkow with the British Admiralty soon leaked out. When the *Berliner Tageblatt* revealed that a naval agreement had been proposed during the King's visit to Paris and had not been declined, a *démenti* appeared in the *Novoye Vremya*. "We can emphatically declare that neither in Paris nor elsewhere has an agreement been made between Russia and England in regard to combined action of their fleets, and no draft of such an agreement has been prepared." That was correct so far as it went, but it refuted a statement which the *Tageblatt* had not made.

While negotiations for a naval agreement were taking place in London, Sazonoff continued his efforts to bring Roumania into the Russian orbit. On returning to power at the opening of 1914 Bratiano, the Liberal leader, spoke in the warmest terms to the Russian Minister at Bucharest. He had always desired the friendship of Russia, and the events of 1913 had produced an immense change of opinion in the country. The visit of the Crown Prince to St. Petersburg at the end of March, accompanied by the Crown Princess and their eldest son, suggested that Roumania was moving out of the orbit of the Central Powers, and the European press began to discuss a marriage between Prince Carol and a daughter of the Tsar. At the opening of May Sazonoff telegraphed that the Imperial family proposed to visit the King at Constanza on June 14. Thus at last King Carol's visit to St. Petersburg years before would be returned. Bratiano, reported the Russian Minister, could hardly find words to express the joy which the Roumanian people would feel. In addressing the Duma on May 23 Sazonoff spoke warmly of the recent visit of the Crown Prince and Crown Princess, praised the wise ruler at Bucharest, and announced the forthcoming visit of the Tsar. The news was received by the Duma with loud applause.

A Foreign Office Memorandum, dated June 9, provided a brief for the conversations with King Carol.<sup>1</sup> The host would doubtless speak of the possibility of a Greco-Turkish war, in which the interests of Russia and Roumania in keeping the Straits open were identical. If he urged his visitor to stand by

<sup>1</sup> *Imperialismus*, III, 169-71.

the Treaty of Bucharest, the Tsar should promise to support the Bulgar-Roumanian settlement but not to guarantee every detail of the *status quo*. More important was the question, which the King or his Ministers might raise, whether closer—perhaps even treaty—relations with Russia were possible. If the improvement of railway connections were suggested, the guests should promise favourable consideration but should inquire whether Roumania was independent of Austria. If the reply was in the affirmative, she should promise neutrality in case of war between Russia and a third Power. In such an event the two states could decide on common action. To go further and aim at an alliance was undesirable, for no paper obligation could predetermine Roumania's decision at the critical moment. Moreover she might exploit such a tie, and secrecy could not be guaranteed.

Though none of the Grand Duchesses caught the fancy of Prince Carol, the visit to Constanza was a resounding success.<sup>1</sup> The Tsar's warmly phrased toast combined graceful tributes to the land and its ruler. "Under the aegis of Your Majesty Roumania has entered on the path of evolution and has made a notable advance. Nowhere could these successes arouse livelier satisfaction than in Russia, who has always taken keen interest in the destinies of her neighbours of the Orthodox faith. I am particularly glad of the opportunity to pay my tribute to the beneficent influence recently exercised by Roumania under the guidance of her King. The work of peace effected by Your Majesty has earned for you the gratitude of the peoples and has enhanced the prestige of your country." After the meeting of the monarchs Sazonoff travelled to Bucharest.<sup>2</sup> King Carol, he reported to his master, expressed deep gratitude not only for the Imperial visit but for Russia's policy during the Balkan crisis. Roumania would always co-operate with her to preserve peace in the Balkans. He had been delighted to hear the Tsar express the wish for an agreement to keep the Straits open to their commerce. Austria was not mentioned, but the King declared that Germany favoured a Russo-Roumanian rapprochement. When Sazonoff complained that Germany's recent conduct had cooled Russo-German relations, Carol expressed the hope that these misunderstandings would pass away.

The conversations with Bratiano were far more intimate.

<sup>1</sup> For Sazonoff's report to the Tsar, v. *Livre Noir*, II, 377-84.

<sup>2</sup> *Imperialismus*, III, 293-9, June 24.

Russia, declared Sazonoff, had championed Roumania's interests, and in so doing had modified her old Bulgarophil policy, without knowing whether she would reciprocate, and whether she was tied by external obligations which prevented harmonious co-operation. Roumania, replied the Premier, was in no way bound to take part in a war in which her interests were not directly concerned. Recent mistakes of Austrian policy had cooled the temperature, but as neighbours they had to keep on fairly good terms. This vague declaration prompted Sazonoff to put a searching question. What would Roumania do, in the event of war between Russia and Austria, if Russia were compelled by circumstances to open hostilities? It would depend on what the circumstances were, was the cautious reply, and what Roumanian interests required. Did Sazonoff think such an event possible in the near future, and did he expect a European war? He believed that peace would be maintained, replied the Russian statesman. A Russian move against Austria was only conceivable if the latter, on an Albanian or some other pretext, attacked Serbia, in which case Russia could hardly stand aside. In such an event, rejoined Bratiano, their paths would meet again, for Roumania had no interest in allowing the weakening of Serbia. "My general conclusion from these talks", concluded Sazonoff, "is that Roumania is not bound in all circumstances to join Austria against us, but that in the event of an Austro-Russian war she would join the stronger party and the one who could promise the greatest advantages. . . . During my three days in Roumania I have formed the very best impressions of her friendliness and of the prospects of the development of our neighbourly relations." A drive across the western frontier in the company of Bratiano was noted in Budapest with angry surprise. It was indeed a memorable excursion. "When we entered Transylvania", writes Sazonoff in his Memoirs, "the same idea probably shot through us both—that we were on Roumanian soil which awaited its delivery from the Magyar yoke and reunion with the motherland. But we kept our thoughts to ourselves, for the time to speak of them had not yet come."

Bratiano gave the German Minister a copy of his report on the conversations.<sup>1</sup> To questions whether Roumania was free from engagements he had replied that she would defend her interests as she had done in the previous year, and that

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIX, 521-6.

these interests made her support those who stood for peace. Russia, declared Sazonoff, pursued the most peaceful policy, and despite the Liman incident he felt certain that nothing menaced her friendly relations with Germany. "He also assured me of Russia's pacific intentions towards Austria, but he added that under no circumstances could she tolerate Austrian aggression in Servia." A few details were added by the King. There had been no talk of anything except friendship, and the impression that something had changed and that Roumania desired to go with Russia was incorrect. He deplored the attempt to make her show her colours. To the question of the German Minister whether Sazonoff had tried to deflect Roumania from the Triple Alliance, the King replied that an attempt had been made not by Sazonoff but by Poklevsky, the Russian Minister. The whole visit, concluded Carol, had passed off without a hitch, and both sides were very satisfied. That a new chapter had opened in Russo-Roumanian relations was visible to all the world, and the explicit warning that an Austrian attack on Servia would bring Russia into the field was quickly known in the Chancelleries. The Tsar and his Minister could be proud of their handiwork. Bulgaria was lost, but Roumania had been won.

## X

On receiving the news of the Serajevo murders Sazonoff telegraphed his condolences to Vienna.<sup>1</sup> Though determined to uphold Russia's historic claims in the Near East, he was as anxious as any statesman in Europe to avert a catastrophe. "The latest events in Austria which have led to such an intensification of Serbophobia", he wired to Hartwig on July 7, "compel us to warn the Servian Government to be extremely careful in regard to questions likely to increase this feeling and to create a dangerous situation. We think it best to postpone the negotiations for a Serb-Montenegrin rapprochement, which has already attracted the attention of the Austrian and even the German Government." Pasitch replied that he fully recognised the need of caution, and had dropped the negotiations with Cettinje. When Hartwig died during a visit to the Austrian Legation on July 10, Belgrad was urged to

<sup>1</sup> Sazonoff's policy after June 28 must be studied above all in *Imperialismus* vols. 4 and 5.

avoid anti-Austrian demonstrations. Similar moderating advice was tendered at Vienna. When the Austrian Chargé spoke of the possibility of Austria requiring a searching inquiry into the Serajevo crime, a hope was expressed that she would not enter on such a dangerous path.

The Foreign Minister kept silence, but on July 16 the Italian Ambassador, meeting Baron Schilling, a high official of the Foreign Office, at a party, asked what Russia would do if Austria took action against Serbia. Russia, was the reply, would not tolerate a blow at her integrity and independence. In that case, rejoined Carlotti, Vienna should be at once informed, since otherwise she might take some irrevocable step. That, replied Schilling, was in the first place the duty of Austria's allies. Coming from Russia it might resemble an ultimatum and make matters worse. On the same day the Russian Ambassador in Vienna reported Austria's intention to present demands to Belgrad after concluding her inquiries. She reckoned on Russia standing aside. Before she reached a final decision, she should be informed what Russia would do if demands were made on Serbia incompatible with her dignity.

Two days later Sazonoff returned to St. Petersburg after a brief visit to the country, and, after considering the Schilling-Carlotti conversation and the latest despatch from Vienna, decided to inform Austria of his views. His interview with the Austrian Ambassador, however, turned out very differently from his expectations. Austria, declared Szapary in the friendliest terms, did not dream of exacerbating her relations with Belgrad. This very positive declaration entirely reassured the Foreign Minister, who remarked to Schilling that no menaces had been needed. "*Il a été doux comme un agneau.*" Pasitch, on the other hand, was full of alarm, and on July 22 he begged Russia to take Serbia's just cause under her protection. Sazonoff accordingly instructed his Ambassador in Vienna to call Berchtold's attention, in a friendly but energetic manner, to the dangerous consequences of addressing demands to Serbia incompatible with her dignity. Before taking this step, he was to consult his French and English colleagues, but joint or simultaneous action was to be avoided. Here was the first direct warning that Russia could not be left out of account.

The visit of the French President and Premier to St. Petersburg on July 20-23 had been arranged long before the Serajevo tragedy, and there is no reason to suppose that it affected

Russian policy.<sup>1</sup> That Poincaré was prepared at any moment to fulfil the obligations of the alliance had been realised since 1912, and Viviani, though reckoned a man of the Left, was equally reliable. Since Austria deliberately kept her secret till the French squadron had left Russian waters, no detailed plans for dealing with the crisis could be worked out. The official toasts drafted by Sazonoff were of a routine character. The loyalty of the French partner during these anxious hours was highly appreciated, but in the affairs of the Near East Russia did not seek guidance in Paris. Her attitude was dictated by her traditions and by the recovery of her strength.

The second act of the drama opened on the evening of July 23, when the Russian Chargé in Belgrad wired that a forty-eight hours' ultimatum had been presented at 6 p.m. The Finance Minister, he added, who represented Pasitch in his absence, begged for the help of Russia, and declared that no Servian Government could accept the demands. A second telegram summarised the contents. When Sazonoff reached the Foreign Office on the morning of July 24 and heard the news from Schilling, he exclaimed: *C'est la guerre Européenne*. He telephoned to the Tsar, who exclaimed: It is monstrous. At this moment the Austrian Ambassador brought the full text, which prompted Sazonoff to exclaim: "You are setting Europe alight. You have burned your bridges."<sup>2</sup> Sazonoff lunched with Paléologue to meet Buchanan, and the Roumanian Minister arrived later. To the Governments which they represented he conveyed a pressing request to discuss common action, adding that the neutrality of England would mean suicide. A Council of Ministers was held in the afternoon, at which he reported the presentation of unacceptable demands at Belgrad and Servia's request for help. Five conclusions were reached. The first approved his proposal to secure an extension of the time limit. The second approved his suggested advice to Servia not to resist invasion if she was too weak, but to entrust her fate to the Powers. The third advised the mobilisation of the military districts of Kieff, Odessa, Moscow and Kazan, and of the Baltic and Black Sea fleets, in case of need. The fourth urged the replenishment of army supplies, the fifth the recall of money lying in German and Austrian banks. After the Council the Foreign Minister saw the Servian Minister and advised the utmost moderation in reply-

<sup>1</sup> Poincaré, *Souvenirs*, IV, ch. 7, and Paléologue, *La Russie des Tsars*, I, ch. 1.

<sup>2</sup> A. VIII, 645-8.

ing to the Austrian note. During the evening the German Ambassador endeavoured to justify the action of Austria and emphasised the importance of "the monarchical principle". Sazonoff sharply condemned the methods of the Austrian Government, declared the Note unacceptable by Serbia, and complained that the short time-limit gave the Powers no chance to examine the situation.

In Sazonoff's opinion the best, if not the only, hope of averting war was for England to speak. What he had in mind was another "Mansion House speech". It was easier for her, he telegraphed to London on July 25, to moderate Austria, for in Vienna she was regarded as the most impartial Power. Since the Ballplatz evidently counted on her neutrality, England should declare that she disapproved this dangerous policy. "In the event of the worsening of the situation, which may involve action by the Great Powers, we assume that England will not hesitate to take her stand at the side of Russia and France in order to maintain the balance of power as she has always done." On the same day he suggested that Serbia should ask England to mediate, since her impartiality was above suspicion. He also appealed to Italy to inform Austria of her disapproval of a conflict which could not be localised.

On July 26 Sazonoff discussed the ultimatum with the Austrian Ambassador in friendly tones. Some of the demands, he argued, were unrealisable. He suggested that they should try to work out a formula which Serbia could accept and which would satisfy Austria in principle. Next day he reported to Paris and London his affirmative answer to England's inquiry whether he approved an English invitation to a Four Power Conference in London. On the same day the Tsar replied to the appeal of the Servian Crown Prince. "So long as the slightest hope remains of avoiding bloodshed, all our efforts will be directed to this end. If, contrary to our sincerest wishes, we fail, Your Highness can be assured that Russia will in no case be indifferent to the fate of Serbia." When Pasitch read the words he crossed himself and exclaimed: God, great, gracious, Russian Tsar!

Austria's declaration of war on July 28 opened the third and final act. There was now little hope. On the morning of July 29 Pourtalès telephoned that he desired to speak to the Foreign Minister and to make an agreeable communication, though he added, *Toutefois, pas trop d'optimisme*. Germany, declared the Ambassador, approved his efforts to secure



concessions from Vienna. This, however, must be kept secret, lest a divergence of views should be inferred. He implored Russia not to thwart German pressure at Vienna by premature mobilisation. When the Ambassador had gone his declaration was discussed by Sazonoff with his advisers, and the conclusion was reached that, even if honestly meant, German advice would have little effect. A second interview in the afternoon brought a less friendly communication. If Russia continued her military preparations, even without mobilising, Germany would have to mobilise and an attack would immediately follow. "Now I see why Austria is so intransigent", exclaimed Sazonoff. Pourtalès jumped up and cried: "I protest with all my strength against this wounding assertion." Germany, rejoined the Foreign Minister, could prove by her actions that he was wrong. At this point the grave news of the bombardment of Belgrad arrived, and the Austrian Ambassador, who was with him, was assailed with angry reproaches. Shortly after the departure of Pourtalès the Tsar telephoned to report a friendly telegram from the Kaiser. Sazonoff replied that the Ambassador's declaration a few minutes before was in another key, and the Tsar undertook to ask Berlin to clear the matter up. He authorised Sazonoff to discuss mobilisation with the War Minister and the Chief of Staff, who agreed that the chances of avoiding war with Germany were so small that general mobilisation should begin. The Tsar's approval was secured by telephone, though late in the evening he withdrew it.

Reporting to Paris the declaration that Germany would mobilise unless Russia stopped her military preparations, Sazonoff added that, as this was impossible, Russia must accelerate her arming and reckon with the apparent inevitability of war. He was most grateful to France for her assurance of support. It was highly desirable that England, without loss of time, should join France and Russia, since only in this way could a dangerous disturbance of the Balance of Power be prevented. There was now only the faintest hope of peace. "In the event of an armed conflict between Austria and Servia", he telegraphed to Bucharest, "our intervention to avert the annihilation of Servia will follow. That will be the purpose of our war with Austria if a conflict proves unavoidable." Roumania was promised rewards if she threw in her lot with Russia.

July 30 was the day of decision for Russia and the world.

At 1 a.m. Sazonoff was roused from sleep to receive the German Ambassador, who asked whether Russia would not content herself with Austria's promise not to infringe the integrity of Servia. This was insufficient, he replied. When Pourtalès asked on what conditions Russia would cease her military preparations, he dictated a formula. "If Austria, recognising that the Austro-Serb question has become a European question, declares herself ready to eliminate from her ultimatum the points which infringe the sovereign rights of Servia, Russia pledges herself to cease her military preparations." It was a polite refusal, and indeed the time for formulas had passed. After the Minister of War and the Chief of Staff had vainly urged the Tsar by telephone to reverse his decision of the previous day and to allow general mobilisation, Sazonoff begged for an audience and was summoned to Peterhof in the afternoon. The Chief of the Staff asked for a telephone message in the event of success, so that the partial mobilisation already in progress could be instantly enlarged. "After that I will break my telephone and leave no address, in case the order is again revoked."

For an hour the Foreign Minister wrestled with his distracted master.<sup>1</sup> There was no more hope of peace, he began. To delay general mobilisation would be perilous. Capitulation to the Central Powers would never be forgiven and would cover the good name of the Russian people with infamy. In such a situation there was nothing left but general mobilisation. The Tsar sat silent. Then, in a voice of deep emotion: "That means sending hundreds of thousands of Russians to their death. How can one fail to shrink from such a decision?" The responsibility for their precious lives, replied Sazonoff, would not rest on him. Neither he nor his Government had willed the war. They had done everything to avert it, even making sacrifices painful to Russian pride. His conscience was clear. The war was forced on Russia and Europe by the evil will of enemies who had resolved to safeguard their power by the suppression of her natural allies in the Balkans, and by the destruction of her traditional influence in that quarter, which meant condemning her to a miserable existence dependent on the caprice of the Central Powers. When he finished speaking the Tsar sat pale and silent. After a time he said, speaking with difficulty: "You are right. We have no choice but to await the attack. Inform the Chief of the Staff of

<sup>1</sup> *Six Fateful Years*, ch. 9; *Imperialism*, V, 196-8.

my order for mobilisation." Sazonoff hurried to the telephone, and orders were despatched to every part of the empire the same afternoon a few minutes after six.<sup>1</sup> In the words of Dobrorolski, head of the Mobilisation Department, the prologue of the great historic drama had begun. This decisive step was taken without consulting France, whose counsels of caution were ignored.<sup>2</sup>

July 31 brought a momentary ray of hope when Austria at last announced her willingness to discuss the ultimatum to Servia. In expressing his satisfaction, Sazonoff suggested that the negotiations should take place in London and that the Great Powers should co-operate. "We hope the English Government will take the lead in these discussions and thereby earn the gratitude of Europe," he telegraphed to his Ambassadors. "It would be a great help if Austria stopped her military operations on Servian territory." It was too late, for on that morning St. Petersburg was plastered with mobilisation orders. When Pourtalès asked for explanations he was informed that the decision was purely precautionary. Russia would take no irrevocable step, and peace could be preserved if Germany were willing to urge moderation at Vienna. The same afternoon Germany proclaimed *Drohende Kriegsgefahr* and summoned Russia to demobilise. Unless a satisfactory answer was made within twelve hours, she would mobilise herself.

On the afternoon of August 1 Pourtalès asked to see the Foreign Minister, who remarked: "Probably he brings me the declaration of war." Would the Government give a favourable answer to yesterday's note? he inquired. Sazonoff turned the question aside, adding that, though the mobilisation could not be suspended, Russia was prepared to continue negotiations. Taking a folded paper from his pocket, the Ambassador repeated his question, emphasising the gravity of refusal. With increasing excitement he repeated the question a third time, and received the reply: *Je n'ai pas d'autre réponse à vous donner*. Deeply moved and with trembling hand he presented a declaration of war. Then he burst into tears, embraced the Minister, and left the room. Germany, telegraphed Sazonoff to London, was striving to place the responsibility for the breach on Russian shoulders. Russia had been forced to mobilise, since Austria was spinning out the discus-

<sup>1</sup> Dobrorolski, *Die Mobilmachung der Russischen Armee*, 1914, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> D.D.F. XI, 261-2.

sions and had bombarded Belgrad. Germany had no right to doubt the Tsar's assurance that he would commit no provocation so long as the negotiations with Austria continued, and that Russia would welcome any solution compatible with the dignity and independence of Servia. Any other attitude would have destroyed the European equilibrium by confirming German hegemony.

Sazonoff, like the Foreign Ministers in the other capitals, was convinced that he had no alternative. All of them wanted peace, but they desired other things still more. He inherited a tradition from which he had neither the power nor the wish to depart. Russia's inability to take up the challenge in 1909 was a bitter memory, and no one could expect her to submit to humiliation again. By 1914, thanks to military reorganisation and a series of good harvests, she had regained her self-confidence. Since the main purpose of the Triple Entente, as defined by Sazonoff, was to prevent the domination of Europe by Germany, now was the time to make a stand. As Berchtold saw the long arm of Russia in the Serajevo murders, so the Russian Foreign Minister envisaged the ultimatum as a blow at Nicholas II not less than at Peter Karageorgevich. Now that Bulgaria was lost Servia was Russia's acknowledged outpost in the Balkans, and Sazonoff spoke of the Serbs as "our children". Had Russia left her *protégé* for a second time to the tender mercies of Austria, she would have forfeited her historic claim to be the champion of the Slav races and have handed over the Near East to the domination of the Central Powers. Though bound by no treaty obligation to intervene, she could no more be expected to remain neutral in face of an Austrian attack on Belgrad than England in face of a German violation of Belgian neutrality. The same instinctive pride of a Great Power which prompted Vienna to throw down the glove compelled St. Petersburg to pick it up. It is true that, while Austria fought under the banner of self-preservation, Russia, whom nobody threatened, marched out to battle in the name of prestige. But in the accepted scale of national values prestige, honour and security are motive forces of equal weight. A few experienced public servants, among them Witte, Rosen and Taube, convinced that Russia was unequal to a conflict with the Central Powers, disapproved an active policy in the Near East; but they possessed no influence at Court, in the army or among the people. Russia's responsibility for the catastrophe was greater than Sazonoff was prepared to admit, for her champion-

ship of Pan-Serb ambitions was Austria's chief anxiety. Yet the ultimate cause of the conflagration was the rivalry of two proud Empires, which was far older than the Austro-Serb feud. Thus when the hour of decision arrived, and the whole world was looking on, neither side cared or dared to draw back.

BERCHTOLD



## CHAPTER V

### BERCHTOLD

#### I

COUNT BERCHTOLD had his faults, but ambition was not among them.<sup>1</sup> He resigned the embassy at St. Petersburg in 1911 at the age of forty-eight, thankful to exchange the ceaseless friction in an unfriendly atmosphere for the unfettered ease of a Grand Seigneur at Buchlau and Vienna. Unlike Aehrenthal, to whom politics were all in all, he was widely regarded as something of a dilettante. His interest in horses and racing was unconcealed. A slight air of boredom seemed to emanate from this well-groomed aristocrat. Masaryk used contemptuously to describe his *expertise* in hats and ties. "Elegant, very elegant, good manners, and that is all", wrote Take Jonescu, the Roumanian statesman.<sup>2</sup> To Szilassy, who had served under him at St. Petersburg, the rumour of his appointment seemed something like a bad joke.<sup>3</sup> In the memoirs of Dumaine, the French Ambassador, he appears

<sup>1</sup> Berchtold's policy must be studied in *Oesterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik*, IV-VIII. His voluminous apologia is in preparation. His article, provoked by Sazonoff's Memoirs, in Steinitz, *Rings um Sazonoff*, 41-55, is of great interest. Pribram, *The Secret Treaties of Austria-Hungary, 1879-1914*; Pribram, *Austrian Foreign Policy*; Friedjung, *Das Zeitalter des Imperialismus*, vol. III; Sosnosky, *Die Balkanpolitik Oesterreich-Ungarns*, vol. II; Kanner, *Kaiserliche Katastrophenpolitik*; Steed, *The Hapsburg Monarchy*; Seton-Watson, *Sarajevo*; Wedel, *Austro-German Diplomatic Relations, 1908-1914*; Stieve, *Die Tragödie der Bundesgenossen*; Frankenfeld, *Oesterreichs Spiel mit dem Kriege*; Schüssler, *Das Oesterreichische Problem und die Entstehung des Weltkrieges*, in *Deutsche Einheit und Gesamtdeutsche Geschichtsbetrachtung*, describe and comment on events from various standpoints. For Francis Joseph see the biography by Joseph Redlich, and *Erinnerungen an Franz Joseph I.*, her. von E. Ritter von Steinitz. The victim of Serajevo should be studied in Sosnosky, *Franz Ferdinand*; Chlumecky, *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinands Wirken und Wollen*; Nikitsch-Boules, *Vor dem Sturm*, and *Neue Oesterreichische Biographie*, vol. III. Conrad, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit*, vols. II-IV; Steinitz, *Rings um Sazonoff*; Baernreither, *Fragments of a Political Diary*; Szilassy, *Der Untergang der Donau-Monarchie*; Musulin, *Das Haus am Ballplatz*; Giesl, *Zwei Jahrzehnte im Nahen Orient*; Czernin, *In the World War*; Andrassy, *Diplomacy and the War*; Hoyos, *Der deutsch-englische Gegensatz und sein Einfluss auf die Balkanpolitik Oesterreich-Ungarns*; Sieghart, *Die letzten Jahrzehnte einer Grossmacht*; Dumaine, *La Dernière Ambassade de France*; Boghitchewitsch, *Die Auswärtige Politik Serbiens, 1903-1914*; Geschoff, *The Balkan League*; Loncarevich, *Jugoslaviens Entstehung*; Radoslawoff, *Bulgarien und die Welkerise*, are useful.

<sup>2</sup> *Souvenirs*, 20-5.

<sup>3</sup> *Der Untergang der Donau-Monarchie*, 208.



as a pale shadow, amiable indeed but timid and superficial.<sup>1</sup>

Such judgments do him less than justice. He had been a successful Ambassador, and Aehrenthal, who knew him well, would never have recommended a mere trifler. Behind the façade of nonchalance were the heart and brain of an Austrian patriot. Responding most unwillingly to the Emperor's urgent and reiterated appeal, he threw himself into the exacting work of the Foreign Office with energy and zeal.<sup>2</sup> The publication of the Austrian documents in 1930 destroyed the legend that he was a mere figure-head. In the five thousand large and closely printed pages which record his activities, from his appointment in February 1912 to the outbreak of war in August 1914, we watch an experienced statesman grappling with difficulties which he had done nothing to create. Though he never impressed his contemporaries like Aehrenthal and Poincaré, his abilities were certainly not inferior to those of Sazonoff. Francis Joseph can hardly be blamed for his choice, for there is no ground for believing that any other available Austrian diplomatist would have performed his difficult task with better success. The French Ambassador described him as the friend and disciple of Aehrenthal.<sup>3</sup> He worked in perfect harmony with the Emperor, and he declared long afterwards that his only consolation during those years of martyrdom was his contact with his Sovereign.<sup>4</sup>

During his first six months at the Ballplatz the chief pre-occupation of the new Minister was the Tripoli war. The main lines of policy in this unwelcome predicament had been laid down by his predecessor, who strove to keep on good terms with both belligerents. The position was paradoxical, for Russian diplomacy was almost effusively Italophil, while Italy's partners watched her performance with unconcealed dislike. Everyone realised that she was gradually drifting away from Vienna and Berlin, and Aehrenthal's veto on the extension of hostilities to European Turkey was bitterly resented in Rome. Berchtold's aim was to minimise the damage by involving Austria as little as possible in the struggle

<sup>1</sup> Dumaine, *La Dernière Ambassade de France en Autriche*, 219-31. Cp Kanner, *Kaiserliche Katastrophenpolitik*, 87-93.

<sup>2</sup> Musulin, *Das Haus am Ballplatz*, 175-8, describes Berchtold's efforts to evade the unwelcome task.

<sup>3</sup> *D.D.F.* II, 26-8.

<sup>4</sup> Berchtold, *Der Herrscher wie ich ihn gekannt*, in Steinitz, *Erinnerungen an Franz Joseph* 307-15.

and leaving initiatives to others. Turkey, he argued, should not be allowed to believe that the Central Powers were tied to the chariot wheels of Russia.<sup>1</sup> Italy, on the other hand, was at this moment more incensed against France than against Austria, for the stopping of her vessels in the Western Mediterranean made her for the moment think more kindly of her allies.

Berchtold's relations with Berlin began pleasantly enough. During a visit to Vienna in March, 1912, William II concluded a political conversation with the words: "I hope we shall get on well together. As far as I am concerned you can rely on me."<sup>2</sup> Bethmann and Kiderlen sent warm greetings, coupled with the assurance that no agreement with Russia was reached at Potsdam of which Vienna had not been informed. Berchtold was much more alarmed by Germany's desire to meet Italian claims. On April 1 the German Ambassador informed him of Victor Emmanuel's request to the Kaiser to influence their ally.<sup>3</sup> Austria was held exclusively responsible for the prolongation of the war, and the King could not forever resist the demand for action in the Dardanelles. Why should her allies hinder her, asked the Wilhelmstrasse, since in the last resort England would intervene and incur the whole odium of a veto? Berchtold replied rather sharply that his reflections led him to a different conclusion. In notifying her seizure of Tripoli Italy had spontaneously declared that she had no intention of touching the *status quo* in European Turkey, and for this reason Austria had placed no difficulties in her way. An attack on the Dardanelles might be followed by an attack on Constantinople, which in turn would provoke Bulgaria and Roumania to mobilise. Under such circumstances could Servia be prevented from invading Old Servia and Greece from seizing Crete? The whole of the Near East would shoot up in flames. The danger was too great to count on the possible opposition of England, whose policy was variable. An Italian request would therefore have to be refused. Austria's course in the Near East since Metternich had been conservative. German policy was similar, and for this reason the Central Powers had won a leading position at Constantinople. Had Berlin completely changed its mind? The Ambassador protested against the suggestion, but argued that the importance of keeping Italy in the Triple Alliance was even greater than the maintenance of a leading position in Turkey.

<sup>1</sup> A. IV, 36-7, March 8.

<sup>2</sup> IV, 59-62.

<sup>3</sup> IV, 73-5, 79-80.

Italy, rejoined Berchtold, was hardly likely to join the Triple Entente when her relations with France were so strained.

In this revealing interview the new Minister showed that he was as little inclined as his predecessor to follow the lead of the predominant partner. He was also annoyed that Italy had tried to work through Berlin. If she had to extend the area of war, let her approach him direct. Temporary action in districts less threatening to peace might possibly receive his silent assent. San Giuliano would realise that Austria must retain her full liberty of action if the Balkan *status quo* were to be modified. Berchtold had not long to wait. On April 15 the Italian Ambassador officially declared that the extension of the arena of hostilities could not be postponed, though care would be taken to avoid repercussions in the Balkans.<sup>1</sup> Berchtold replied that he had no desire to criticise Italian measures, but that he could not anticipate a decision from such limited operations. Larger measures would require Austrian assent. When Avarna hinted at the occupation of one or more of the Aegean islands, he retorted that it would destroy the *status quo*. If the proposed naval movement were to produce a reaction in the Balkans, or to alter the *status quo* on the coasts and in the islands of the Adriatic or Aegean, he must reserve his attitude. When, however, the Ambassador suggested the occupation of Rhodes, which was outside the Aegean, he replied that he would not object, though Italy would have to offer guarantees that it would cease at the restoration of peace. San Giuliano was grateful for the concession, and was ready to promise the return of occupied islands.

Directly this arrangement was made Italy bombarded the forts of the Dardanelles, to which Turkey replied by closing the Straits. Berchtold expressed his surprise and annoyance, adding that Italy must bear full responsibility for the results.<sup>2</sup> The episode was particularly regrettable after what he understood to be the assurance that naval operations would at present be confined to the islands at the entrance of the Aegean. He denounced his troublesome ally in a private letter to the Austrian Ambassador at Berlin. "People in Berlin seem to envisage this drama solely from the angle of the renewal of the Triple Alliance. They start from the assumption of the drift of Italy towards the Western Powers, and point to the clash of interests with England and France caused by the

<sup>1</sup> IV, 100-6.

<sup>2</sup> IV, 110-7, 154-5.

Tripoli expedition. The latter argument is intended to make us believe that Italy will be driven to closer reliance on us and cease her Austrophobe policy in the Adriatic. If this conception is correct, has the fear of her desertion of the Triple Alliance at this moment any foundation? The continual reference to Italian public opinion, which would utilise the rumour of our opposition to naval action in the Dardanelles to criticise the alliance, inevitably raises a doubt as to the practical value of a relationship in which the one party wishes to sacrifice its obligations to its convenience, and the other is expected to agree in order to keep the untrustworthy associate in the partnership. . . . German diplomacy would do well to warn Italy against an enterprise which, like all previous attempts against Turkey, must obviously fail. Unfortunately the other European Powers in this case seem to care chiefly about winning or not losing the favour of Italy."

Terrified by the fear of a Balkan conflagration, Berchtold asked his ally for a written promise that she would withdraw from the islands after the war, and warned her not to play with fire.<sup>1</sup> His remonstrances were renewed when he was informed that Italy attached great importance to the occupation of Kos. The occupation of islands in the Aegean without previous agreement with Austria, he pointed out, infringed Article VII of the treaty of alliance. If Austria did not claim compensation at the moment, she reserved her right. This time it was the turn of the Italian Ambassador to utter a warning as to the grave results to the relations between the two countries involved in Austria's attitude towards the occupation of a few unimportant islands. Meanwhile Italy pressed steadily forward, and on May 23 the Austrian Ambassador in Rome reported that thirteen islands had been seized, of which Rhodes was the chief.

The plight of the Triple Alliance was considered during a two days' visit to Berlin at the end of May, but the result of the conversations was not altogether satisfactory to Berchtold.<sup>2</sup> Austria's hypothetical claim to compensation was recognised, but the Wilhelmstrasse declined to believe in the danger of Balkan repercussions. Despite the affirmations of solidarity, concluded his report, there were certain differences, not confessed and perhaps not realised on the German side, which Austrian statesmen would have to keep in mind. He was thinking particularly of the German attempt to manœuvre

<sup>1</sup> IV, 163-5, 172-4.

<sup>2</sup> IV, 182-6, May 24-6.

England into a situation which would render her more inclined to a rapprochement. Hence the backing of Italy's Mediterranean policy and the ignoring of Austro-Italian differences in the Adriatic. Hence also the stress on the eventuality of a conflict with France, which, in the absence of a real difference of interests between Paris and Vienna, meant so little to Austria. Germany was thinking mainly of the West, Austria of the East. The value of the alliance to both parties was beyond challenge, but it never occurred to the new Foreign Minister that it was his duty to play second fiddle.

As the war dragged on, the clamour in Italy for action outside Tripoli became irresistible. On May 31 she announced that the expulsion of Italians from Turkey had transformed the situation, and that Chios would be occupied in reprisal.<sup>1</sup> Berchtold unhesitatingly refused his assent. If Italy were to infringe her treaty obligations, Austria might also resume her freedom of action. The Italian Government angrily replied that her veto rendered further occupations impossible, and that when it became known the majority of Italians would turn against the alliance. Turkey was already showing herself more intransigent. The two countries were by this time thoroughly annoyed with one another. "Of course I am anxious not to sacrifice Italy's friendship for trifles," wrote the Foreign Minister to his Ambassador in Rome. "It is not much pleasure to have daily disputes with Avarna. The conflict about sparsely populated rocks and apparently meaningless words may seem at a distance to be petty, pedantic and bureaucratic. In reality large interests are at stake, in the first place our own, secondly world interests. We should be false to our most sacred obligations if we were to sacrifice them in order to back up Giolitti's wrong-headed policy. Italy should not forget that the Triple Alliance was made to maintain the *status quo* in the Near East, and that the whole of our diplomacy in this case is devoted to the vindication of this principle. It is the duty of the Italian Government to explain to the people the dangers involved in the destruction of order and tranquillity in the Near East. It would be monstrous to make us responsible and thus to jeopardise our alliance." Similar words had been used about Austria, and with equal justification, when she had cast a stone into the Balkan pond in 1908.

Berchtold found himself between two fires, for Kiderlen

<sup>1</sup> IV, 193-4, 210-12.

was continually urging him not to stretch the bow too tight.<sup>1</sup> "In my view", he replied, "I have been very accommodating in saying that I would not protest against the occupation of Rhodes, Karpathos and Stampalia, provided that the Italian Government gave me an assurance as to its purely temporary character. When Italy, without consulting Vienna, proceeded to occupy other islands, I merely indicated that this procedure was not in harmony with treaty obligations, and that, if we did not assert our right to compensation, we must reserve it for the future." No acceptable written confirmation of Avarna's statement about the return of the islands was forthcoming, and Italy now made their return dependent on the recognition of Italian sovereignty over Libya by the Great Powers.

On July 8 and 9 the Foreign Minister for the first time described the European situation to a Ministerial Council.<sup>2</sup> The dangers involved in the war had increased since Aehrenthal's last survey in December 1911. The appearance of Italian troops in the northern islands or the forcing of the Dardanelles might easily provoke a general rising in the Balkans. In such an event Austria would have to strengthen her frontier troops, in order to prevent changes in the neighbouring territories without her being consulted. The Haldane mission had failed; England and Germany were arming with feverish energy; an Anglo-German war was more than probable; French opinion was more incensed against Germany than at any time since the 'seventies. He would do his best to improve relations with Russia, and the personal confidence he had won as Ambassador might be of use. It was a momentary consolation that Russia dreaded Balkan complications no less than Austria. If, however, they occurred, she would unhesitatingly follow her traditional interests. The Foreign Minister ended on a grave note. There were several dark clouds on the horizon, particularly the Tripoli conflict, the Anglo-German rivalry (sharpened by the Franco-German antagonism), and the obstacles to an Austro-Russian rapprochement. Each of these might compel the Monarchy to fight, either in defence of its vital interests or in fulfilment of treaty obligations. Diplomacy would strive to prevent such a catastrophe, but it was powerless without an adequate army and navy. In such a situation Austria might be faced by the painful alternative of a perilous war or the abdication of

<sup>1</sup> IV, 228-30, June 26.

<sup>2</sup> IV, 254-7.

her position as a Great Power. He must therefore urge the granting of the credits demanded by the Services.

Berchtold carried his analysis a stage further in a despatch to his Ambassador in London on July 20.<sup>1</sup> The attitude of the Powers towards the *status quo* in the Near East had undergone a remarkable change in the last eighteen months. Till then it had been an axiom of the members of the Triple Alliance, above all of Germany, to whom Turkey always looked in time of danger. The cooling off dated from the Potsdam meeting and had been recently manifested in the transfer of Marschall, the stoutest champion of Turco-German solidarity. Italy had no desire to upset the *status quo* in the Balkans, but she was near the line beyond which lay the automatic raising of the whole problem of the Near East. Austria's attitude, on the other hand, was unchanged. "Now as before we strive, in so far as we are supported by other Powers, to save the existing political conditions on our south-eastern frontier from shocks, to avert conflicts, and, if this proves impossible, to localise them. Particularly since the regularisation of the legal status of the Bosnian provinces we can profess a sincerely conservative policy in the Balkans." France, as a creditor of Turkey, desired her peaceful development, but as Russia's ally she was not a free agent. Of all the Powers England was nearest to Austria in regard to Turkey, and perhaps the two Powers might co-operate in keeping her alive. Writing to London again on August 8 he expressed a wish to destroy "the legend commonly accepted in England that our policy is made in Berlin," and explained that the additions to Austria's small fleet need cause no alarm since it was designed exclusively for the defence of her own interests.

With so many anxieties crowding upon him Berchtold was cheered by a visit of King Ferdinand at the beginning of August.<sup>2</sup> A profound transformation in the Balkans, he wrote to his Minister in Sofia, was increasingly probable. For that reason Austria's relations to Bulgaria were of growing importance, since the latter would play the chief rôle among the Balkan states if anything happened. Fortunately those relations had recently become more and more friendly. Ferdinand hinted at a discussion of spheres of influence, but he had made no response, not wishing to encourage tendencies hostile to the *status quo*. "On the other hand we do not dream of trying to hold up the process of evolution so to speak

<sup>1</sup> IV, 283-7.

<sup>2</sup> IV, 329-31.

with our own body. If therefore once again the hour of fate sounds for Turkey, the moment will have arrived to discuss the Balkan problem with Bulgaria." Such discussion was likely to lead to agreement, since she coveted no part of the territory of the Monarchy, and her ambitions in Macedonia did not menace its interests. "Our policy towards Bulgaria must endeavour, without urging her to action, to prepare the way for the expected moment, whether it be near or far away. We must try to strengthen the recognition on the part of the King and leading circles that no antagonism exists between our interests, and that in case of grave events a certain parallelism will emerge; and on the other hand we must try to prevent Bulgaria being deflected by foreign influences from the natural direction now being pursued to a course where our interests would conflict." Next to his desire to maintain the *status quo* in the Balkans, the governing principle of Berchtold's policy in the Near East was to keep the wires to Sofia in good repair.

## II

On August 13, 1912, the Foreign Minister sent a circular telegram to the Chancelleries in the hope of averting war in the Balkans.<sup>1</sup> The Tripoli conflict had reached a stalemate, for the Turks could not recover their lost province and the Italians were unable to strike a mortal blow. The longer the struggle lasted, the greater the danger of the Balkan states entering the fray. Pressure on either belligerent was out of the question, and mediation plans had failed. No statesman in Europe realised so early and so fully the perils of the situation. That the Balkan peoples coveted Turkish territory was notorious, but the risks of attacking the strongest state in the Near East were considerable. Why should not the Powers join in an attempt to stop the drift to war by encouraging Turkey to initiate reforms?

It seemed possible, began the Circular, that concessions might end the Albanian revolt. On the other hand there were ominous manifestations in the Balkans, among them the recent massacre of Bulgarians at Kotchana, which might lead to foreign intervention. There was talk of some sort of autonomy for the Albanians, which all the Balkan races had reason to welcome as the beginning of decentralisation. "Directly the Porte has broken with the rigid centralisation of the Young Turks,

<sup>1</sup> IV, 339-40, 347-50.



under which not only the Albanians but all the other nationalities had to suffer, the peaceful road to the attainment of their legitimate wishes stands open. It would be in their own interest that the new Government in Constantinople should not be disturbed by external influences, but should have time to continue the individualised treatment of the separate races. It would also be in the interest of the maintenance of tranquillity in the Balkans and therefore of European peace. The Vienna Cabinet, which steadily pursues the policy of fostering the peaceful development of all the Balkan states, would gladly discuss with the other Great Powers whether they would be inclined, on the one hand through friendly representations to the Porte to strengthen it in its new decentralising principles, on the other to suggest to the Balkan states that it would be wise, in the interest of their own compatriots in Turkey, to leave the Mukhtar Cabinet time for the application of its individualised administrative policy, and for this purpose to avoid everything which might imperil tranquillity in the Balkans and thereby divert the attention of the Porte from internal affairs." The plan was merely an outline, for its author was anxious to secure the moral support of the Powers. Yet "decentralisation" was an elastic formula, meaning different things to different people. To the Turkish Ambassador, who asked for explanations, he explained that there was no intention of making detailed proposals, still less of a policy of intervention. The response from the Great Powers was favourable, and Sazonoff, whose attitude was of crucial importance, welcomed the plan as a new sign of the identity of aims in the Balkan policy of Austria and Russia.

On August 22 Berchtold wrote privately to Kiderlen that the significance of his initiative was widely exaggerated as well as wrongly interpreted.<sup>1</sup> "Nothing was further from my intention than a return to the policy of intervention. My sole object was to secure time for the Turkish statesmen, who are filled with the best intentions, to carry through their conciliatory action." On the same day he despatched an explanatory circular telegram to Sofia, Belgrad, Athens and Cetinje. He had no thought of putting pressure on Turkey, of intervention by the Powers in her domestic affairs, of a Conference of the Powers, or of increasing the concessions which the Porte was ready to make to the various nationalities. "I hold by the traditional policy of the Monarchy which strives

<sup>1</sup> IV, 370-2, 375-6.

for peace, the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Balkans, and the tranquil development of all the Balkan peoples. My first object is to give the new Turkish Cabinet moral support by the agreement of the Powers to its new system, which involves a breach with the *doctrinaire* centralisation of the Young Turks. The second is to shield the conciliatory action of the Mukhtar Cabinet from external difficulties, to inform the Balkan states of the unanimous wish of Europe to maintain peace and the *status quo* in the Balkans, and to fortify this advice by the reminder that the present Turkish regime is moving in a direction which allows us to expect that the centralising tyranny of the Young Turks will be abandoned, and that through a more individualised administrative policy greater consideration will be given to the circumstances of the Balkans. It is only in this sense that the word 'decentralisation' should be understood." It was too late to emphasise the limited scope of the word, and the more the plan was discussed the less approval it found. To the Turks, reported the Austrian Ambassador at Constantinople, autonomy was the half-way house to separation.

A week later, in a second circular despatch to the Powers, Berchtold noted the favourable replies to his invitation and went into further detail.<sup>1</sup> He had no wish to claim the lead for Austria in the Eastern Question. He desired to spare the susceptibilities of Turkey and to avoid all suspicion of tutelage. No collective action at Constantinople or the Balkan capitals was contemplated. He merely desired a unanimous declaration by the Powers of their hope for the maintenance of peace in the Balkans as a result of the change of opinion and policy in Turkey. Free elections for a new Parliament and local councils in the Vilayets were desirable, so that every element in the population might express its wishes by constitutional means. The Powers should make friendly and separate representations to Turkey, thus emphasising the unanimous wish of Europe for peace. The second circular was warmly welcomed by Sazonoff, on the ground that it removed the ambiguities of the first, particularly in regard to decentralisation. Russia's aims in reference to the Balkan question were identical with those expounded by Berchtold. On the other hand he doubted whether the new course in Constantinople deserved as much credit as it received in Vienna. His scepticism was shared by the Austrian Ambassador at Constantinople,

<sup>1</sup> IV, 387-9, 397-8.

who feared that the wind might change again. Berchtold had little faith in his own creation, remarking with a smile, *Je crois qu'en somme, de tout cela, il ne restera pas grand' chose*.<sup>1</sup>

Berchtold confided to the German Chancellor, who visited him at Buchlau on September 7, the real cause of his initiative.<sup>2</sup> Events were moving so quickly on the Turco-Montenegrin frontier, in Bulgaria and in South Albania, that some member of the Triple Entente might have come forward with a scheme which would have relegated Austria, the most interested of all the Powers, to a secondary position. He proceeded to expound her attitude towards future eventualities. Her chief interest in the Balkans was the maintenance of the *status quo*. If Turkey went into liquidation she could not be indifferent, especially in regard to Albania where she possessed old treaty rights of protection over the Catholics. Nor could she allow the east coast of the Adriatic to pass into the orbit of Italy. If a conflict were to occur she would strengthen her frontier troops and inform the Balkan states that territorial changes required her consent.

Though the response to his two circular despatches had been as favourable as he could anticipate, Berchtold had no more arrows in his quiver. When the British Ambassador inquired on September 11 whether he intended to continue the conversations and make further proposals, he replied in the negative.<sup>3</sup> For the moment he was satisfied that the Powers could now discuss complications as they arose. Since they could have done so at any time his initiative was a failure, and he had no illusions as to the gravity of the situation. On September 14 he addressed a Ministerial Council.<sup>4</sup> For some time he had been aware of a Bulgar-Serb defensive alliance under Russian patronage, and more recently a Greco-Bulgarian rapprochement had taken place. A concerted attack on Turkey was probable, and Austria might very soon be asked to define her attitude. If she could not prevent a conflict she must try to localise it. Two courses were open—to veto changes of the *status quo* without her consent, or the more risky alternative of informing Serbia that a crossing of the Turkish frontier could not be allowed. He himself preferred the first. The War Minister deprecated action which might involve a major conflagration for which the army was not prepared, and the Austrian Premier agreed.

<sup>1</sup> *D.D.F.* III, 474-5.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T.* IX, part I, 689.

<sup>3</sup> *A.* IV, 415-9.

<sup>4</sup> *IV*, 428-9.

When Sazonoff realised where his Balkan League was leading he made a desperate effort to put on the brakes. A Russian *aide-mémoire* of September 19 urged Turkey to take Macedonian reform in hand without delay, providing equality before the law and participation of the various racial elements in the administration.<sup>1</sup> Berchtold pronounced the plan too detailed and too suggestive of intervention, but gave it moral support on the ground that it developed his own initiative and that he could do nothing more himself. His chief apprehension, he confessed to the German Chargé, was a junction of Serbia and Montenegro by the partition of the Sanjak of Novibazar, which would imperil Austria's South Slav territories. The union of the two kingdoms would create a Great Serbia, which would exert an unhealthy attraction on Bosnia, Herzegovina, Dalmatia, Slavonia and Croatia. Here was a convincing reason for striving to keep the peace. The only light in a dark sky was Sazonoff's assurance that he had absolute confidence in the wisdom and loyalty of his Austrian colleague. In addressing the Delegations on September 24 Berchtold spoke gravely of the continuous lightning in the Balkans.<sup>2</sup> The Monarchy had great interests at stake. "Only if we are armed on land and sea can we face the future with confidence."

At the end of September Schemua, the Chief of the General Staff, sent a Memorandum to the Emperor calling for a lead.<sup>3</sup> Turkey, he declared, had neither the power, the will nor the time to carry out the desired reforms, and the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Balkans was no longer an axiom. It was an imperative necessity for Austria to formulate her political aims. He proceeded to state his own wish for immediate action in the event of a Balkan war. In an elaborate reply Berchtold poured water into the wine. Russia and Italy, he began, would not consent to an aggressive policy. The annexation of Bosnia had given the first impetus towards a Balkan League and provoked the distrust of all the Great Powers. Mobilisation before consultation with them would be regarded as an obstacle to the maintenance of European peace, and would lead to co-operation between the states which desired to prevent an Austrian advance in the Balkans, namely Russia and Italy. Austria could not formulate her wishes

<sup>1</sup> IV, 446-7, 447-9, 500.

<sup>2</sup> Schulthess, *Europäischer Geschichtskalender*, 1912, 301-2.

<sup>3</sup> IV, 490-3, 528-31.

till the victory of one side or the other showed how far her interests were involved. Measures to safeguard the frontiers should be kept to the minimum. This cautious Memorandum concluded with a summary of recommendations. I. Continuance of co-operation with the Powers to avert the outbreak of war. II. No approval of mobilisation by the Balkan states. III. The declaration at a fitting moment that, if the *status quo* could not be maintained, changes must not be made without Austria's consent. IV. Military measures at present only to safeguard the south-eastern frontier. V. Close watch on Russia's military activities on the Austrian and Roumanian frontier.

With all the Balkan states beginning to mobilise it seemed futile to speak of peace. Yet a final effort was made by Poincaré, who on October 5 proposed an Austro-Russian declaration to the Balkan states in the name of the Powers.<sup>1</sup> Berchtold promptly accepted both the plan and the draft, which consisted of three parts. In the first the Powers energetically reproved any steps likely to produce a conflict. In the second, basing themselves on Article 23 of the Treaty of Berlin, they promised to take in hand administrative reforms in European Turkey, it being understood that the reforms would not affect the sovereignty of the Sultan or the integrity of his Empire. In the third the Powers declared that, if war occurred, they would permit no territorial changes in European Turkey. The Note was presented to the Balkan Governments on October 8, the day on which Montenegro declared war. Equally belated was the declaration of the Turkish Government on October 7 that it would at once introduce administrative improvements.

A private letter to Kiderlen on October 8 reveals Berchtold's bitter feelings and anxieties more clearly than his official utterances.<sup>2</sup> The formation of the Balkan League had changed the face of the Eastern question for the worse. Russia desired a serviceable tool. The Alliance, he understood, included yearly meetings between the General Staffs of the four signatories. That the four *parvenus* might quarrel about their territorial ambitions was a certain consolation. England's *Einkreisungspolitik*, cleverly supported by Russian Pan-Orthodoxy, had taken a step forward. The last day or two had witnessed a bustle in the camp of the Triple Entente which had won Poincaré a momentary success, but had also proved

<sup>1</sup> IV, 552-3, 558-9.

<sup>2</sup> IV, 575-6.

the close co-operation of Austria's opponents. "We ought to take an example from them and not let the fires of the Triple Alliance burn low. Otherwise it will inevitably become the football of its foes." The Foreign Minister was not lying on a bed of roses. When he entered the Ballplatz in February he was confronted with nothing more alarming than the Tripoli campaign. In October the Near East, despite his endeavours, was aflame. Italy's attack on Turkey encouraged the Balkan states to follow suit, as he had always feared, and Turkey's promises of reform had come too late. He would do his utmost to prevent a general conflagration, for since the annexation of Bosnia the Hapsburg Monarchy was satiated. But he was also determined that, in any changes which might be made, his country should not be treated as of no account.

### III

It had not been an easy task to localise the Bosnian crisis: it was bound to be much more difficult when the four Balkan states sprang at Turkey and brought her down. Three momentous dramas were in progress simultaneously—the struggle between the Cross and the Crescent, the race for hegemony among the Balkan allies, and the larger issue of Austro-Russian rivalry in the Near East. Aehrenthal's task in 1908-9 had been simple in comparison. He had merely to hold his ground, for Russia was too weak to fight. By 1912 she had partially recovered her strength. She was the acknowledged patron of the Serbo-Bulgar alliance, and no one could expect her to content herself with a passive *rôle*. There was another new factor in the game. In 1908 Italy had stood aside, critical but in no way hostile to her ally. Since then she had signed the secret treaty of Racconigi with Russia, who had given her moral support throughout the Tripoli war. Though her interests in the Adriatic might coincide for the time with those of Austria, she required careful watching. Berlin was friendly enough; but Kiderlen was less pliable than Bülow, and grave differences of opinion were to emerge.

The best hope at the outset lay in Sazonoff, whose desire for peace was beyond suspicion. On October 9, the day after Montenegro's declaration of war, the Russian Ambassador brought a cordial message from his chief.<sup>1</sup> He was delighted that Austria and Russia had confidence in each other. For

<sup>1</sup> IV, 589-90, 620-4.

the localisation of the conflict it was essential that they should remain in close touch. The Russian Government sharply condemned the conduct of the Balkan states, and he was resolved to veto any territorial change. The only possible threat to co-operation would arise if nationalist opinion in Russia were to be excited by any step suggesting intervention, such as the concentration of Austrian troops on the Servian frontier or the occupation of the Sanjak. Berchtold expressed his satisfaction at the declaration that no territorial changes would be allowed. It would be deplorable if Sazonoff were to be rattled by unfounded suspicions among his countrymen. He must be aware that Austria had no thought of military action or conquests, and merely desired that her specific interests in the Balkans should not suffer. On the other hand she could not discuss the military measures required for the defence of her frontiers. A conversation between Sazonoff and the Austrian Chargé three days later took matters a little further. Even the temporary occupation of the Sanjak, declared the former, would be regarded as a violation of neutrality and would destroy "our entente". Russia's only interest was the Straits, which should remain in Turkish hands. Austria's interest, replied Szilassy, was Albania, and Sazonoff confessed that Russia did not care what Austria did with the Albanians. The Chargé felt that it was the most favourable moment for an Austro-Russian rapprochement since the Japanese war. On the other hand the position of Sazonoff was weakened by his Austrophil reputation.

At the end of October, when the Balkan states had won their first sensational victories, Berchtold explained his views to the Chief of the Staff.<sup>1</sup> The maintenance of the *status quo* might be rendered impossible by the continued success of the allies. *Faits accomplis* might take the form of territorial aggrandisement or of the creation of autonomous spheres of influence which would lead to annexation. To oppose such developments would be useless, but Austria must seek to preserve her political and economic interests. In the event of a moderate increase of Servia and Montenegro, the creation of an autonomous and healthy Albania would serve as a counterweight, and certain securities might be procured against a hostile attitude on the part of the two states. The Sanjak was unimportant. Since Austria had no territorial ambitions Italy could not claim compensation, and the two

<sup>1</sup> IV, 715-7, October 26.

countries could co-operate. Russia had pledged herself to the *status quo*, but under the pressure of public opinion she would come down on the side of the allies. At a suitable moment it would have to be ascertained whether, in the event of a change, she was willing to give the required guarantees. Austria should avoid premature intervention, in order that at the decisive moment she could emerge with her forces intact. Complications might be avoided, he explained to the German Ambassador, if Austria and Russia returned to the old conception of spheres of influence in the Balkans.<sup>1</sup>

The programme was developed in a despatch to Berlin.<sup>2</sup> In view of the defeat of Turkey the *status quo* policy was out of date. Austria's general attitude could be summarised under seven heads.

I. Her consent to the expansion of a neighbour state must depend on guarantees that it would not pursue a hostile policy. Fair words and promises would not be enough. A close economic co-operation would not only benefit Servia and Montenegro but ensure friendly relations for a long period.

II. Servia's territorial expansion to the Adriatic must be vetoed. Even the suggestion would prove that she did not contemplate relations of confidence with Austria. Moreover expansion in this direction would damage Albanian rights.

III. The creation of an independent Albania, large enough to live, was needed to prevent the establishment of a Great Power on the east coast of the Adriatic.

IV. The Central Powers should help to secure compensation for Roumania in the event of large Bulgarian gains.

V. A few trifling frontier modifications should be made.

VI. The Austrian market must as far as possible be preserved in the territories conquered from Turkey.

VII. A free port should be established at Salonica.

On the last day of October the French Ambassador reported the belief of his Government that the time for mediation was near, and suggested a declaration by the Powers that they would approach their joint task "in a spirit of absolute disinterestedness."<sup>3</sup> That, replied Berchtold, was impossible, for Austria, as the neighbour of the belligerents, had interests to guard. Russia had agreed to the declaration, interjected the Ambassador, though she too possessed large interests in the Balkans. Russia, retorted Berchtold, would certainly not disinterest herself in the fate of Constantinople. Impartiality

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIII, 258-9.

<sup>2</sup> IV, 727-9, October 30.

<sup>3</sup> IV, 736-7.



would be a better word than disinterestedness. The latter would encourage the Balkan states to believe that they had *carte blanche*. The British Ambassador explained to Grey that to expect Austria to disinterest herself in the Balkans was as hopeless as to expect Russia to disinterest herself in Mongolia.<sup>1</sup> When Kiderlen proposed identical action by Germany, Austria and Italy, Berchtold drafted a reply recognising the utility of mediation by the Powers, though he argued that they must wait for an invitation by one of the belligerents.

While repeatedly declaring that Austria sought no territory, Berchtold was determined to keep his hands free. When Sazonoff remarked in a newspaper interview that Austria's great economic interests in the Balkans must be recognised, he sent a message that she also possessed political interests.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile he strove to keep on good terms both with Bulgaria and Roumania. The former was told that he would not object to an advance to Constantinople, but a concession to Roumania in the Dobrudja would be a fair reward for her neutrality which alone allowed Bulgaria to win. The sooner Bucharest was approached, the better. Here were the outlines of a policy from which he never swerved. In the eastern half of the Balkan peninsula Bulgaria, so far as he was concerned, could do much as she liked. In the Western half he felt bound to limit the aggrandisement of the Slav states.

Having crushed the Turks in Macedonia, Serbia marched west towards the Adriatic. Now was the time for Berchtold to declare himself. On November 3 he expressed a hope that Italy would join in preventing her from settling on the coast.<sup>3</sup> On the same day he wired to St. Petersburg that it could not be allowed. It would infringe the principle of ethnic autonomy proclaimed by the Balkan states themselves, and would open the door to Servian naval power in the Adriatic. An official notification in the *Fremdenblatt*, that an advance into Albanian territory would have neither military nor ethnic justification, gave a broad hint to Belgrad. Italy agreed and informed Serbia of her views, but Sazonoff pleaded eloquently against the veto. If it were maintained Russia would be charged with letting Serbia down, and his policy of Austro-Russian rapprochement would collapse. Only access to the sea could satisfy the Serbs, and a satisfied neighbour would be in Austria's interest. The Austrian Ambassador was so impressed

<sup>1</sup> G. and T. IX, part II, 69-70.

<sup>2</sup> IV, 749, 756.

<sup>3</sup> IV, 762-4, 779-81, 794-5.

that he counselled his chief to yield. Russia, he believed, would rather fight than surrender as in 1909.

Speaking in the Delegations on November 6 Berchtold declares his readiness to take into account the victories of the allies, but added that Austria had the right to demand that her legitimate interests should not suffer in the settlement.<sup>1</sup> He wired to Belgrad that Austria's conduct had shown the greatest goodwill.<sup>2</sup> For instance she had assented to the supply and transport of munitions, and had not interfered with operations in the Sanjak. She was ready to accept a large expansion there and in Macedonia, subject to the maintenance of her commercial interests. Moreover she approved a commercial outlet to the sea. Territorial access would violate the ethnic rights of the Albanians, and was unnecessary for Servia, who could use lines through Bosnia or Albania, or obtain a harbour on the Aegean where Austria preserved her trade without territorial access. The same arguments and declarations were sent to St. Petersburg. Sazonoff protested that the route to the Aegean was impracticable, but he informed Servia that, while approving her wish for an Adriatic port, Russia could not fight for it.

Servia was the chief anxiety, but Montenegro could not be left out of account. On November 17 Berchtold declared that Scutari must form part of Albania.<sup>3</sup> The moment had come, he wired to Rome, for the two Cabinets to discuss its frontiers and institutions. The more purely Albanian it was, the stronger it would be. He proceeded to suggest desirable frontiers. To shield it from external troubles, it might be placed under an international guarantee or neutralised. A prince should be chosen who was not a member of the three confessions represented in the country. San Giuliano's attitude to the programme was friendly but reserved. He agreed about a Servian port, but wanted more details of the proposed economic partnership of Austria with the Serb states. He doubted whether such a primitive and divided community could long survive as an independent state. He congratulated Austria on her great moderation.

On the same day a telegram from St. Petersburg reported that Russian opinion and the Russian Government were hardening on the question of the Servian port.<sup>4</sup> Kokovtsoff

<sup>1</sup> Schulthess, *Europäischer Geschichtskalender*, 1912, 306-7.

<sup>2</sup> IV, 798-9, November 8.

<sup>3</sup> IV, 906-10, 935-8, 949-50.

<sup>4</sup> IV, 950-1, 962-3, 965-8, 971, 973.

and Sazonoff were pacific, but the extensive military preparations showed that war was a distinct possibility. Pressure on the model of 1909 would produce an explosion. The Ambassador added that his reading of the situation was shared by his German colleague. Still more alarming was the news, which came through Italian channels, that Sazonoff insisted on the cession of a Servian corridor to the sea as the price of his consent to Austro-Italian views on Albania. The Tsar himself, reported the Austrian Ambassador, was no longer so firm for peace, since he had been assured that the army was prepared. The growing hostility of Russia was to some extent counterbalanced by the declaration of William II to Franz Ferdinand in Berlin on November 22 that for the sake of Austria's prestige he would be prepared to wage a world war with the Triple Entente. Such assurances were welcome, but they had no effect on Austrian policy, which had been laid down in advance. "It is a blessing for us all", observed Asquith to the Austrian Ambassador in London, "that Count Berchtold displays such patience and self-control." Even Nicolson remarked that nobody could have acted with more dignity and moderation.

On November 24 Berchtold sent instructions to his Ambassador for his audience with the Tsar.<sup>1</sup> If the ruler pleaded for a Servian port, he should be reminded that Austria's neutrality had allowed Serbia to throw all her forces against Turkey, and the permission to import munitions was a sign of special consideration. Despite attacks in the Servian press and the maltreatment of her consuls, Austria would not oppose the annexation of territory inhabited by Serbs. Unfortunately Serbia had cast her eye on territory inhabited exclusively by Albanians. Austria had no intention of threatening her economic independence or of resisting a guaranteed economic access to the Adriatic. If the Tsar pressed for a Servian port which should not be fortified, he was to be reminded of the strong temptation to break the promise. The audience took place on November 26, and Nicholas II was extraordinarily gracious. Russia's fear that Austria would intervene in the Balkan conflict, he declared, had been dispelled by her conciliatory attitude. In pleading for an unfortified and neutralised Serb port, he explained that Russia had no direct interest in the matter—only natural sympathy with Serbia and a desire for her economic development. The conversa-

<sup>1</sup> IV, 997-8, 1011, 1024-6.

tion was satisfactory, but the political weather in St. Petersburg was very changeable.

At this point Berchtold responded to the reiterated desire of the German Government for a precise formulation of Austria's minimum demands.<sup>1</sup> His seven point memorandum of October 30, he began, could now be supplemented. Serbia's claim to a port could not be discussed. Austria's attempts at an economic rapprochement as a means to a political *détente* had unfortunately provoked the suspicion not only of the Triple Entente but of Italy and even certain circles in Germany, though no special privileges were in view. It was to the interest of all the Powers that the coming settlement should be more than a mere halting place. For this purpose the Balkan states, above all Serbia, must recognise their new frontiers as definitive. Stabilisation would be impossible unless Bulgaria met the wishes of Roumania. The minimum of Austria's conditions for her assent to territorial changes was five.

I. Guarantees that Serbia would live in peace and friendship with Austria.

II. Explicit renunciation by Serbia of expansion in Albania or on the Adriatic coast, and recognition of the new status of Albania.

III. Free development of Albania.

IV. Compensation for Roumania.

V. Security for Austrian trade in Salonica. On these matters Austria could not yield, though she was ready to discuss the methods of carrying them out.

The audience of November 26 failed to diminish the anxieties of Vienna. A conflict with Russia, wrote Berchtold, was not impossible.<sup>2</sup> The Ambassador should therefore pack up the most important documents of his archives, and discreet preparations for a sudden departure of officials should be made. A private letter from Szapary, Berchtold's chief official adviser, added that Austria was not bluffing. The Ambassador appeared to have been a little too mild in his conversations with Sazonoff, for she was resolved to fight for her vital interests as officially defined. Berchtold's hands were strengthened by the mission of Conrad von Hötzendorf to Bucharest, and by the assurance of King Carol in a letter to Francis Joseph dated November 30 that in the event of a European war Roumania

<sup>1</sup> IV, 1048-51, November 28.

<sup>2</sup> IV, 1072-6, November 29.

would stand by her allies.<sup>1</sup> The return of Conrad to his position as Chief of the Staff, from which he had been ejected in the last days of Aehrenthal, was due to the initiative of Franz Ferdinand, and Berchtold explained that it indicated no change in policy. Yet the soldier, convinced that attack was the best form of defence, once again proved a thorn in the flesh. He promptly signalled his restoration by urging a veto on supplies to Serb and Montenegrin forces.<sup>2</sup> Berchtold replied that it would be a breach of neutrality and would be taken to herald a declaration of war. "If my policy is to succeed, we must continue to avoid every provocation of the Balkan states."

The armistice of December 4 in no way diminished the anxieties of Europe, for it was easier to defeat Turkey than to divide the spoils. On December 12 Masaryk brought a message from Pasitch which could not be communicated through official channels.<sup>3</sup> Serbia wished to live in peace and friendship with Austria, but for this purpose her political and economic independence must remain intact. After 1917, when her commercial treaties expired, she would be glad to grant Austria a preference. He was also ready to meet her in regard to the Servian railways, present and future. In return, Serbia needed for her economic independence a port on the Adriatic with a narrow corridor. It would be purely commercial, and she would pledge herself never to change its character or allow a foreign Power to use it as a naval base. If these wishes were refused, she would have to tie herself more closely to the Balkan states and form a customs union with Bulgaria. When Masaryk had remarked that Austria's prestige would scarcely permit her to approach Serbia on these lines, Pasitch rejoined that he would come to Vienna and make the request. In thanking his visitor Berchtold explained that, apart from the objections to a Serb port, it seemed impossible at the moment to take up the proposals, since Austria was already in contact with other Great Powers in regard to some of them, and the Ambassadors' Conference in London would have to discuss them. His refusal to respond to this feeler from a statesman whom he described to the British Ambassador as Austria's arch-enemy has been denounced as

<sup>1</sup> IV, 1035-6, 1081-2. Conrad, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit*, III, 351-70.

<sup>2</sup> V, 123-4.

<sup>3</sup> V, 107-8; G. and T. IX, part II, 289, 531; Masaryk, *The Making of a State*, 24, 77; Baernreither, *Fragmente eines Politischen Tagebuches*, 180-7; Kanner *Kaiserliche Katastrophenpolitik*, 110-3.

inexcusable short-sightedness by Masaryk himself and by an army of critics. Our verdict will depend on whether we share his disbelief in Serbia's sincerity and in particular his conviction that the promise never to turn a commercial port into a military base would be broken, as Russia had broken a similar treaty obligation in regard to Batum.

On December 6, acting under instructions though pretending to speak only for himself, the German Ambassador asked Berchtold to be good enough to explain his plans a little more clearly.<sup>1</sup> Austria's chief aim, replied the Foreign Minister, was to emerge from the crisis without war or loss of honour. "I could easily provoke war in twenty-four hours. That I do not wish, and never for an instant do I forget my responsibility to the German Empire." The situation was complicated by the fact that Austria's policy towards Serbia was governed by the desire to keep seven million Southern Slavs as contented subjects of the Monarchy. The full significance of this problem was not realised abroad. He himself had no conception of the Southern Slav question when he took office, and one must have lived in Vienna to understand it. During his term as Ambassador in St. Petersburg he had always asked himself why Aehrenthal attached decisive importance to it, and in consequence was always having what seemed to be needless friction with Russia. His relation to the present Ambassador was the same as had been that of Aehrenthal to himself. Count Thurn did not understand the attitude of Vienna. The longer and more carefully he studied things, the more important appeared the Southern Slav question for the Monarchy. It had become more critical during the last few days, for very ominous tendencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina were at work. What economic and political guarantees should be asked for friendly and enduring relations with Serbia he was not at present quite clear. The ideal would be neutralisation on the Belgian model, but that was impracticable. Austria's best instrument for making her influence felt in the Western Balkans and for checking hostile acts on the part of her Slav neighbours, namely the Sanjak of Novibazar, had unfortunately been abandoned by Aehrenthal. Now it was difficult to find an effective substitute. Another promise of good behaviour, like that of 1909, was not worth the paper on which it would be written. A commercial treaty would not suffice to alter

<sup>1</sup> G.P. XXXIII, 459-62, 477-8.

the course of Servian policy. Berchtold's pessimism, concluded the German Ambassador's report, was shared in the leading circles. A fortnight later Berchtold was a little more hopeful. The questions of Albania and the Servian port seemed likely to be solved on Austrian lines. In view of Servia's desire for friendly negotiations it might be possible to avoid the demand for effective guarantees which could only be obtained at the risk of war.

Berchtold welcomed the plan of an Ambassadors' Conference and shared the general preference of London to Paris. England, he remarked to the British Ambassador, had behaved with laudable impartiality and had not taken sides.<sup>1</sup> The instructions to Mensdorff authorised the Ambassador to share in the discussions which were to begin on December 17, to report the proceedings to Vienna, but to take no decisions.<sup>2</sup> He was to keep in touch with his colleagues of the Triple Alliance and to work for a united front. In regard to Albanian questions preliminary agreement with Italy was particularly important. The discussions should be secret, and no official records should be drawn up. Grey had mentioned three subjects as certain to be reviewed, the future of Albania, Servia's access to the sea, and the Aegean Isles. In Austria's view the new Albania must be big enough to live. Opposition to a Servian port should appear as a championing of Albanian interests rather than a veto on Serb aspirations. A commercial outlet should be welcomed, preferably through Bosnia. The question of the Aegean Islands should not be raised by Austria. If her commercial interests in Salonica were safeguarded, it might go to Bulgaria or Greece, preferably the former.

In an accompanying despatch Mensdorff was instructed to make clear that the interest of Austria was not confined to the solution of certain concrete questions, since she was vitally concerned with future political arrangements as a whole. For over thirty years her programme had been the independence of the Balkan states and the preservation of Turkey. The old order had gone, and unfortunately her relations to Servia had been for years extremely unsatisfactory. She was the only small state in Europe which behaved as a bad neighbour. Twice in the last four years had she compelled Austria to take expensive military measures and endangered the peace of the world. This situation must end. If she claimed frontiers embracing alien races, that was a matter of

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* IX, part II, 232.

<sup>2</sup> *A.* V, 124-31, December 15.

European concern. In such circumstances the peace of Europe would be threatened by the sword of Damocles, and Servia would decide if it was to fall. Austria must at any rate be on her guard and arm to the teeth. To the British Ambassador he declared that he would take no action against her while the war continued.<sup>1</sup>

The short Christmas break, following the first three meetings of the Ambassadors, prompted Berchtold to exchange ideas with Sazonoff.<sup>2</sup> The Powers having accepted the Austrian veto on a Servian port and the Austrian proposal for an autonomous Albania, the ownership of Scutari became for the time the chief apple of discord. The Montenegrins, who were besieging it, regarded it as the main object of the war, and Russia sympathised with their aim. Berchtold, on the other hand, claimed it for the Albanians on the ground that it was purely Albanian and was essential to a healthy state. Next in importance came the construction and control of a line to secure for Servia a commercial outlet. In Berchtold's view the transport of munitions should only be allowed in time of peace. Sazonoff replied that her right to import munitions in time of war was essential as compensation for her disappointment in regard to a port. In the unlikely event of war with Austria, the latter could seize the munitions a few miles from the sea. As regards Scutari, something must be done for Montenegro and the dynasty, since a half-starved people needed some fertile lowlands.

Though Berchtold's expectation of an agreement during the Christmas holiday failed, he was not without hope. On December 24 Conrad and Potiorek, the Commander in Bosnia and Herzegovina, urged the calling up of reservists and an attack on Servia as a preliminary to the final liquidation of the Southern Slav question.<sup>3</sup> The international situation, replied Berchtold stiffly, had improved during the last few days: Servia would not attack and indeed she seemed inclined for friendly discussions. It might deteriorate again and Austria might have to fight for her vital interests, but that moment had not arrived. Potiorek had enough troops in Bosnia to keep order. For Austria to adopt an aggressive policy would leave her isolated in Europe. It was impossible to abandon the moderate policy of the last three months

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T.* IX, part II, 282, December 11.

<sup>2</sup> *A. V.* 226-9, 237-8, 279-83.

<sup>3</sup> *V.* 238-9.



and to attack without convincing reasons. The calling up of reserves in the southern provinces could not be authorised.

Though the Foreign Minister was too pacific for his Generals, he was too intransigent for the taste of Sazonoff, who complained of military preparations in Galicia. When the Russian Ambassador spoke of Austria's "mobilisation" and hinted at counter-measures, Berchtold explained that the preparations on the northern frontier were not mobilisation but precautions necessitated by Russia's retention of time-expired reserves.<sup>1</sup> The Austrian forces had been inferior to the Russian, and the inequality was being removed. He agreed in desiring the reduction of frontier troops by both parties. But if it occurred before the details of a Balkan settlement had been fixed by the Ambassadors' Conference, the ambitions of the Balkan states, particularly Serbia, would be encouraged.

In reply to a further complaint Berchtold sent a full explanation of his views.<sup>2</sup> He was convinced of Russia's peaceful and friendly attitude. Austria's military preparations on her northern and southern frontiers were distinct problems. As regards the former, Russia had undertaken extensive mobilisations at the beginning of the crisis, and had retained some of her time-expired troops. Though this had encouraged the Balkan states to ignore her interests Austria had delayed counter-measures, being convinced that Russia's policy was friendly. Even now the changes only removed existing disparities, and there was no reason for the attribution of aggressive aims. In reference to the southern frontiers, different considerations came into play. Larger preparations were necessitated by the fact that Serbia had mobilised and that prominent Serbs had threatened Austria with war. Reductions could only take place when all pending questions with her neighbours were settled and their armies in process of demobilisation, but she would not feel in the least alarmed if Russian time-expired troops continued to be retained. Austria's unyielding attitude, of which the Tsar complained to the Kaiser, worried Bethmann, who remarked to the Austrian Ambassador, "not as Chancellor to Ambassador but as a personal friend", that her armaments contained the possible germ of a conflagration which in their own interest and in that of all Europe should be prevented.

Berchtold was like a man walking on a tight rope, with a recipice on either side. To Russian, German and Italian

<sup>1</sup> V, 246-8, 254-5.

<sup>2</sup> V, 294-7, 313.

eyes he seemed intransigent, to the Austrian War Office lacking in punch. Like Aehrenthal he appealed to his master and did not appeal in vain. To the demand for the despatch of troops and artillery to Semlin he replied that he could not authorise further preparations against Serbia.<sup>1</sup> The measures already taken had complicated his task, and even Austria's allies had begun to doubt her sincerity. He was prepared to fight for what he thought the vital interests of his country, but he was determined not to fight alone. Russia's relations with Italy were notoriously intimate, and Germany's support for Austria's policy was tepid enough.

On January 21, 1913, the Italian Ambassador informed Berchtold that the delimitation of Albania was creating grave apprehensions in Russia.<sup>2</sup> The Russian Cabinet had given way on the Servian port and an autonomous Albania. Further surrender was impossible without arousing a sentiment of humiliation which would endanger internal tranquillity. The Tsar felt Austria's attitude as a personal injury, and his Government was contemplating larger armaments. Benckendorff had received instructions energetically to claim Scutari for Montenegro. If this was impracticable, Montenegro must have the lake and a strip of land to the sea; Ipek, Prisen, Djakova and if possible Dibra must be assigned to the Balkan victors; and Albania must be placed under the effective control of the Powers. Berchtold denied that Austria had made all the sacrifices. Both countries had championed the *status quo*, but she had shown herself ready to surrender the principle in favour of the Balkan states on certain conditions. Her consent to the expansion which had already taken place was in itself a considerable concession. He was ready to admit Montenegrin claims which did not sacrifice Albanian rights. As regards the towns demanded for the Balkan victors Djakova was purely Albanian, and its separation could not be justified. Moreover, unless the new state possessed some fertile lowlands, it could not live. The Serbs might have Ipek when Scutari had passed into Albanian hands, and Prisen would be a final concession. The Italian Ambassador pointed to the disproportion between the petty question of the Albanian frontier and the unpredictable consequences of a European war. Berchtold retorted that he certainly did not desire to unleash a war, but he also had to think of public opinion.

<sup>1</sup> V, 341-2. Semlin is opposite Belgrad.

<sup>2</sup> V, 510-11.

If Russia put forward unacceptable proposals Austria would withdraw from the Ambassadors' Conference.

Berchtold's strongest argument was the necessity of creating an Albania big enough to live, but the discussion of boundaries was complicated by urgent considerations of prestige. That Russia had yielded in 1909 rendered it more difficult for her to yield in 1913. That the nationalities in the Dual Monarchy were becoming increasingly restless and self-confident made it necessary for the Government to display its strength. When King George spoke to Mensdorff in grave terms of Russia's difficulties, the Ambassador argued that Austria had also to consider public opinion.<sup>1</sup> Rightly or wrongly the idea had gained ground that she took her orders from Berlin and must always give way. This impression must be removed once for all. Berchtold himself never used such unvarnished language, for his conversations were inevitably official. But he shared Aehrenthal's profound conviction that, if the Dual Monarchy failed to maintain its prestige at home and abroad, its days were numbered. That the policy carried with it the risk of war he was well aware, but the dangers involved in the abdication of a Great Power seemed to him immeasurably greater. Yet he always repudiated the charge of intransigence. "While Russia regards every inch of Albanian territory evacuated by Serb or Montenegrin troops as an Austrian victory at her expense", he observed to the Italian Ambassador, "we take the view that every inch of Turkish territory allotted to the Balkan states is an Austrian concession, since at the outbreak of hostilities Russia laid down the principle that no territorial aggrandisement should be allowed." If Russia abandoned this principle and tried to deprive Albania of all fertile soil, it was no wonder that Austria stood firm.

A remarkable letter from the British Ambassador at the end of January described the growing indignation of Vienna.<sup>2</sup> "It seems to me that the relations between Russia and Austria-Hungary, instead of showing any signs of improvement, are growing worse from day to day, not officially perhaps but through the steadily increasing animosity between the two nations. Servia will some day set Europe by the ears and bring about a universal war on the Continent, and if the French press continues to encourage Servian aspirations as it has done during the last few months, the Serbs may lose their heads and do something aggressive against the Dual Monarchy

<sup>1</sup> V, 541, 544.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T.* IX, part II, 467.

which will compel the latter to put the screw on Servia. I cannot tell you how exasperated people are getting here at the continual worry which that little country causes to Austria under encouragement from Russia. It may be compared to a certain extent to the trouble we had to suffer through the hostile attitude formerly assumed against us by the Transvaal Republic under the guiding hand of Germany. It will be lucky if Europe succeeds in avoiding a war as a result of the present crisis. The next time a Servian crisis arises, with probably a younger Emperor on the throne here, I feel certain that Austria-Hungary will refuse to admit any Russian interference in the dispute and will proceed to settle the differences with her little neighbour by herself *coûte que coûte*."

#### IV

The resumption of the war after Enver's *coup* on January 23 announced that the end of Europe's anxieties was far away. Two of the gravest perils, it is true, had been removed. Servia, it was agreed, was not to have a port on the Adriatic, and the dream of a triumphant Bulgarian march into Constantinople faded away at the Chatalja lines. Yet a danger of equal magnitude remained in the delimitation of Albania. During the second Balkan war there was little fighting and the military situation was not seriously changed. Adrianople, Jannina and Scutari fell after prolonged sieges, but the centre of interest shifted from the battlefield to the Council Chamber.

Complaints of his stiffness, not only from the capitals of the Triple Entente from Rome and Berlin, were not without effect on Berchtold, though he held them to be unjust; for he was as anxious to localise the conflagration as any statesman in Europe. On January 27 he wired that, in view of Russian misconceptions of Austria's policy, his master had decided to send an autograph letter by Prince Gottfried Hohenlohe.<sup>1</sup> The ring of Grand Dukes, Grand Duchesses and Court officials, he explained to the German Ambassador, must be broken through, so that the Tsar might know the truth. The envoy, he wrote to his Ambassador, was to explain how the problems of the war concerned Austria, and to emphasise the entire absence of hostility to Russia. "If leading circles are willing to understand this language, here is their chance. If they are not, we shall have done our duty and shall console ourselves

<sup>1</sup> V, 555, 574-5, 581, 598, G.P. XXXIV, 284-5.

with the thought: *In magnis voluisse sat est.*" The letter was accompanied by a despatch explaining once again that Austria asked nothing but an Albania able to live. While welcoming the announcement of the mission, Sazonoff expressed a hope that it would bring concessions on one or other of the chief causes of anxiety—the delimitation of Albania and Austrian preparations on the Servian frontier.

The letter of Francis Joseph, dated February 1, skilfully blended a defence of Austria's attitude with a spirit of conciliation.<sup>1</sup> Prince Hohenlohe was cordially received by the Tsar, who expressed his deep gratitude for the direct approach, declaring that he looked up to Francis Joseph as his father. Sazonoff was equally warm in his expression of thanks, while Kokovtsoff and Sukhomlinoff favourably impressed the envoy with their pacific assertions. The chief topic was the military preparations of both parties, yet no concessions were made. Austria, argued Hohenlohe, could not reduce her troops in the south lest Servia might attack. His statement was confirmed by Berchtold, who explained in a despatch that even the slight reduction desired by Russia would not be understood by Austrian opinion before the frontiers of Albania were fixed. The Tsar's autograph reply was less mellow in tone than his conversation.<sup>2</sup> His conciliatory spirit, he complained, had not been sufficiently appreciated, for in the London Conference his Ambassador had not received from his Austrian colleague the expected support. Moreover Russian opinion, distressed by the sacrifices imposed on the Balkan Christians, was unfavourably impressed by the size of Austria's armaments. Despite this cold *douche* the Austrian Ambassador reported that the Mission had produced an admirable result, though the impressionable Tsar might easily swing round again. The envoy's report on his return to Vienna was not very hopeful. Unless Austria took some conciliatory step, such as a slight reduction of her troops in Galicia, he expected war in six or eight weeks.

While Prince Hohenlohe was endeavouring to remove suspicions in St. Petersburg, the fiery Conrad was straining at the leash. On February 6 Berchtold strongly protested against the War Office plan of sending a large supply of arms to Albania.<sup>3</sup> "It would be interpreted by the Powers as an unjustifiable breach of neutrality, would compromise our relation

<sup>1</sup> V, 620-1, 634-6, 651-4, 666-7, 672-3.

<sup>2</sup> V, 674-6, 697-8.

<sup>3</sup> V, 655-6, 677-8.

to Italy, and encourage her to similar independent action. . . . I naturally attach the greatest importance to being precisely informed of the intentions of the General Staff in Albania, so that I may protest in good time against measures which appear to me inopportune or undesirable." Conrad replied that he anticipated action against Serbia, "since I regard the aggrandisement of this state as a grave danger for the Monarchy, which will become more difficult to remove the longer we wait. I believe indeed that the question of the delimitation of Albania will lead to a conflict unless the Monarchy gives way. If it comes, it is of the utmost importance that Servian forces should be tied by an Albanian insurrection." As for a breach of neutrality other states, particularly Russia and France, had little scruple; Italy had long been smuggling munitions into Albania, and Russia was despatching material for heavy artillery to Antivari for action against Scutari. Since hostilities on a large scale were by no means improbable, it was the duty of the Chief of Staff to bear these matters in mind. Conrad was never happy except when he was playing with fire.

A private letter to his Ambassador in Rome reflects Berchtold's mind on the morrow of the Hohenlohe Mission.<sup>1</sup> The Turks were doomed to defeat. Bulgaria rejected advice to compensate Roumania. Austria's religious protectorate in Albania should be preserved. If Italy retained the Aegean islands occupied during the Tripoli war, Austria must claim compensation. Italy's attitude concerning Albania was on the whole favourable to the Austrian standpoint, and had compelled Germany to keep in step. Yet the negotiations had shown that she cared less for the Austrian programme than for keeping one foot in the other camp. Berchtold was almost equally dissatisfied with Berlin, whence came more exhortations to compromise than promises of support. In the event of the fall of Scutari, it was asked, could not the position of the Russian Government be eased by some small concession?<sup>2</sup> A breach arising out of relatively unimportant frontier questions should if possible be avoided. The Austrian reply was not wholly uncompromising. Perhaps some territory might be found as a final concession, and financial compensation might be granted to Montenegro on condition that it was spent on peaceful and cultural objects. But the fall of Scutari was not in sight, and meanwhile the burning question was the settlement of the eastern frontier of Albania.

<sup>1</sup> V, 691-5, February 10.

<sup>2</sup> V, 722-3, 731-3.

Mensdorff's reports of the Ambassadors' Conference revealed the tensions of the long debate. Benckendorff was almost beside himself with anxiety. Grey was a thoroughly honourable and impartial man who understood the Austrian position, but in certain matters he was bound to support Russia.<sup>1</sup> After accepting the Austrian standpoint concerning the Servian port, he argued, she could not possibly yield on all three outstanding points in the Austro-Serb controversy—Scutari, Djakova, Dibra. Berchtold replied that he would yield Dibra as a final concession, on condition that the rest of the Austrian plan was accepted. Grey was pleased, but expressed the wish that Djakova had also been conceded, for Russia would be very obstinate. Sazonoff argued once more that Djakova was not vital to Albania, and strengthened his plea by promising Albania Mount Tarabosch, which dominated Scutari.

After taking a fortnight to consider the results of the Hohenlohe Mission, and after Francis Joseph had received his envoy in audience, Berchtold announced the important concession in regard to troops for which Russia had pressed.<sup>2</sup> The increase, he explained, had been due to Russian trial mobilisations and the retention of her reserves, and was designed merely to remove inferiority. To prove his peaceful and friendly sentiments the Emperor was ready to reduce his forces in Galicia on condition that Russia cancelled her special military preparations on Austria's northern frontier. The arrangement, he proposed, should be announced as the result of the exchange of letters between the rulers. Sazonoff and his master were delighted, and congratulations arrived from Berlin.

The Djakova problem remained, and the little Albanian town became the pivot of the world's affairs. Austria stood alone, for her allies shared the general conviction that it was not worth a world war. Sazonoff, reported the Austrian Ambassador at St. Petersburg, would not give way.<sup>3</sup> "I cannot help asking myself whether the inclusion of Djakova in Albania would really outweigh the immense disadvantages of a breach with Russia. It is an offence to common sense to assume that for such a relatively trivial matter our whole future relation to Russia, and indeed the peace of Europe, should be jeopardised. And yet that is the fact. I assure you that opinion here has become so excited and incensed that

<sup>1</sup> V, 728-9, 765-6.

<sup>2</sup> V, 801-3, February 22.

<sup>3</sup> V, 838-41, 867-8.

the leading statesmen can only with great difficulty hold it in check." Arguments were useless, for the Russian Government could not defend further concessions. Even the peaceful Kokovtsoff urged a settlement in the next few days. Why should not Djakova be given to the Tsar to celebrate the Romanoff tercentenary? Berchtold softened so far as to accept conditionally Grey's proposal for an international Commission to decide the question, and left him to select its members.

On March 13 Berchtold revealed his innermost thoughts in a letter to Jagow.<sup>1</sup> From the beginning of the crisis Austria had stood firmly for certain points, notably the exclusion of Serbia, Russia's stoutest supporter in the Balkans, from the Adriatic, the creation of an Albania able to live, and the satisfaction of Roumania's territorial claims. The first two had been accepted by the Powers after a long struggle, but were not secure while Serbia and Montenegro attempted to defy their will. Austria had kept to her programme of non-intervention, combined with a determination to take part in the final settlement. But if the Powers remained indifferent to the performances of the Serbs and Montenegrins, she might be compelled to put these arrogant young Slav states in their place.

As regards the third point of the programme, territorial compensation to Roumania, Silistria must change hands if King Carol's long-established policy was not to be compromised. Yet unless Bulgaria obtained compensation for her loss, she would prepare for revenge. If Roumania and Bulgaria could be satisfied, they and Turkey would bar the extension of Russian influence towards the West. Austria had no differences with Bulgaria, and the solution of the Servian problem depended mainly on Austro-Bulgarian relations. King Ferdinand was not very dependable, but he was shrewd enough to realise the value of Austria's friendship. King Peter, on the other hand, was helpless in face of Servian Chauvinism. To foster Serbia's expansion would be unnatural, for her antagonism was fundamental. Not only did she strive to become an Adriatic Power and to deal a mortal blow at the Albanian people, but she dreamed of annexing the Serbo-Croat territories of her neighbour. Moreover the union of the two Serb kingdoms, which might occur at any time, could not be permitted. Only the recognition that irremovable obstacles

<sup>1</sup> V, 937-40.



prevented the continuation of a Pan-Serb policy, and that the Servian Piedmont, wedged in between Austria, Albania, Bulgaria and Roumania, might herself be the victim of irredentism, could induce Serbia to renounce her Pan-Serb dreams and to save herself by leaning on Austria. The ineradicable mistrust of Serbia revealed in this remarkable letter provides the key to Berchtold's policy. That his German ally was unable to share his *penchant* for Bulgaria, his desire to balance the latter's loss of Silistria with the gain of Salonica, and his antipathy to Serbia, was a bitter pill.<sup>1</sup> Austria, observed the Kaiser to the Austrian Ambassador, had missed the chance of suppressing her neighbour during the Bosnian crisis, and there was nothing to do but to reach an understanding with Belgrad.

A conversation with the German Ambassador on March 13 revealed even more clearly than his letter to Jagow the innermost thoughts of the Foreign Minister.<sup>2</sup> After listening quietly to the familiar plea that Austria should disarm the hostility of Serbia by an honourable rapprochement, he replied that unfortunately the key was not in Vienna but Belgrad. Everyone in Vienna, himself first of all, honestly desired good relations. But all endeavours to fulfil this intention would be shipwrecked on Serbia's disinclination for an honourable reconciliation. In exchanging St. Petersburg for the Ballplatz he had brought with him no general political programme. But his first aim had been to reach good relations with Serbia, since as Ambassador in Russia he had tasted the evil consequences and the chronic unpleasantness in Austro-Russian relations arising from the friction between Vienna and Belgrad. To his great regret a year's work as Foreign Minister had shown that all attempts were in vain, and that neither the Servian dynasty nor people desired to make an honourable peace. The Serbs, like most other Slavs, dreamed of a Great Servian realm. Their decisions were directed towards its realisation, and never—at any rate as the result of peaceful argument—would they renounce the idea of adding to it Austria's Southern Slav provinces. This had been shown in the Bosnian crisis. To understand the policy, the methods and the aspirations of Serbia, one had to understand the soul of the people. To take sides with and to satisfy Serbia would involve the attempt to make her stronger and bigger, which no Austrian statesman could do. Except for some Czechs

<sup>1</sup> V, 940-2, 979-80.

<sup>2</sup> G.P. XXXIV, 504-8.

and the Southern Slavs, public opinion would be hostile. Moreover it would be positively dangerous, for it would be helping to create Great Serbia.

On March 20, after appeals from many quarters, Berchtold surrendered Djakova.<sup>1</sup> The Emperor, determined to avoid war if possible, urged him not to draw the bow too tight. The sufferings of the non-combatants in Scutari, he explained, and the atrocities of the allies in Albania, compelled him to place humanity above political considerations. The speediest delimitation and evacuation of Albania were essential, and the Catholic and Albanian minorities in the territories falling to Serbia and Montenegro would have to be protected. On these conditions he was willing to concede the town. His decision was acclaimed by the anxious Chancelleries, and the Austro-Russian tension seemed to be removed; for Sazonoff was ready to assign Scutari to Albania if Djakova were allotted to Serbia. Berchtold had an excellent case in claiming a purely Albanian town for the little state which he was trying to establish. Yet in such a thorny field concessions had roughly to balance, and he would have been wise to have made the inevitable surrender at an earlier stage.

Europe's respite was brief, for the Scutari problem entered on a new and alarming phase. Berchtold secured his master's approval for a telegram to Cetinje, demanding the cessation of the bombardment on account of the danger to non-combatants, and announcing the application of force in the event of refusal.<sup>2</sup> The first step would be the closing of the Austrian frontier and the pacific blockade of the Montenegrin and part of the Albanian coast. The announcement produced a storm in St. Petersburg. Sazonoff's voice on the telephone trembled with excitement as he spoke to the Austrian Ambassador of the virtual ultimatum. He could not comprehend this sudden step which threatened to destroy all that had been attained, particularly at a moment when the Ambassadors' Conference had agreed to joint action regarding the speedy evacuation of Albania. It was contrary to the principle of the Concert to take isolated action which endangered the peace of Europe. It would be said that Austria had only waited for the reduction of Russian troops to attack Montenegro. Russia would have to recall her reservists at once and take other measures. If the coercion of Montenegro occurred, concluded

<sup>1</sup> V, 1014-5, and Steinitz, *Erinnerungen an Franz Joseph*, 307-15.

<sup>2</sup> A. V, 1026, 1030-1, 1049-52.

the telegram, Austria must be prepared for war. When Sazonoff received the Ambassador the same evening his excitement was unabated. In vain did Thurn argue that the proposed action would only carry out the will of the Powers. Sazonoff replied that he had warned Servia and Montenegro again and again in much sharper terms than Vienna was aware. Now his whole policy was shipwrecked. Never had the situation been so dangerous.

Berchtold defended his action in a circular telegram on March 25.<sup>1</sup> The cessation of the bombardment of Scutari could only be secured by the energetic action of one or more Powers. After yielding on Djakova, Austria expected the speedy intervention of the Powers at Cetinje and Belgrad. It was incorrect to say that she was trying to break up the Concert by isolated action. On the contrary she had acted in the spirit of the Ambassadors' Conference. It was a case of urgency, for new Servian transports were arriving and a fresh attack was at hand. The despatch was more plausible than convincing, for the essence of the Concert was the avoidance of isolated action. Thurn found Sazonoff on March 27 in quieter mood but deeply depressed. He had never seen his master so incensed, for he felt his confidence to have been misplaced. Another ultimatum, reported the Ambassador, would make the cup overflow. The only consolation was that Sazonoff would consent to joint coercion, though Russia herself could take no part.

The Powers having agreed to a naval demonstration, the Ambassadors' Conference decided to send warships to Antivari.<sup>2</sup> When Grey asked which Powers would take part, all promised or hoped to co-operate except Russia. Sazonoff's acceptance of a blockade was facilitated by the news that the bombardment of Scutari had recommenced. But what if Nicholas of Montenegro, relying on his friends in St. Petersburg, snapped his fingers at the demonstration? If forces were landed and Montenegrin blood was shed, would Pan-Slav sentiment in Russia look calmly on? Though Austria no longer talked of isolated action, the danger seemed more acute than ever. For if Scutari fell to Servia and Montenegro after a long and costly siege, would they surrender it unless compelled by force? The disunion of the Powers, on which Sultans of Turkey had played for generations, could be turned to account by Christian hands.

<sup>1</sup> V, 1057-9, 1080-2.

<sup>2</sup> V, 1114-5, 1119.

On April 6 Berchtold poured out his heart to his Ambassador in Berlin.<sup>1</sup> Germany, he complained, did not seem to understand the gravity of the issues. In the last few weeks, particularly since the fall of Adrianople, the tide of Pan-Slav enthusiasm in Russia had mounted high. Hartwig and Pasitch were intriguing with the Pan-Slav leaders against Sazonoff. Hartwig was telling Belgrad that Austria would not stir, and that Russia's *protégés* could do as they pleased. The Servian force sent to Scutari was disproportionate to the obligations of alliance. Talk was heard of the union of the two Slav states under the auspices of Russia, and Austria's consent might be sought as the price of the evacuation of Albania. The naval demonstration should be transformed into an effective blockade. If the other Powers held back, Austria would have to secure the evacuation of Albania, if possible with the co-operation of Italy. This might involve a war against Serbia, Montenegro, and perhaps Greece: it would depend on Russia. What else could Austria do, if the decisions of the Ambassadors' Conference were ignored, than take independent action, even at the risk of war with Russia? "From the start our demands have been very modest, and we have subsequently made far-reaching concessions. If we now sacrifice our minimum, which Europe has recognised, merely for the sake of peace, this would in my judgment involve catastrophic reactions on our position in the Balkans and jeopardise our Southern Slav territories. Thus the question of peace or war is now in the hands of Russia." Unless she informed Serbia and Montenegro that they must look after themselves if they ignored the Ambassadors' decisions they would not give way. In that event Austria would have to take her own line. At this moment the British Ambassador reported that the Foreign Minister was being bitterly attacked on all sides for his policy of inaction.<sup>2</sup>

Sazonoff and his master desired war as little as Berchtold and Francis Joseph. The Tsar advised Nicholas to submit to the will of Europe, since he would not be allowed to retain Scutari if it fell. The King replied that he could not yield, and even the withdrawal of the Servian troops produced no effect. Civilians in Scutari were dying of hunger, and the surrender of the fortress was expected from day to day. The tension was almost unbearable, and on April 22 Berchtold

<sup>1</sup> VI, 50-1.

<sup>2</sup> *G. and T.* IX, part II, 658, April 7.

asked the Powers what they were going to do.<sup>1</sup> If the naval demonstration was not to be made a reality by the landing of troops, Austria would have to act alone.

On April 23 Scutari surrendered to Montenegro, and the peak of the long Balkan crisis was reached. Flouting the will of Europe, declared Berchtold in a circular despatch, was more than Austria could stand. "It has become an inescapable necessity for the Great Powers at once to undertake energetic action to restore their damaged prestige and to carry out their decisions, either by the occupation of Montenegrin ports by international detachments or by bombardment. If they hold back, we shall feel morally bound to carry out their will and to compel the evacuation of Scutari." On the same day the Ambassadors' Conference recommended a summons to Montenegro to hand over the town to the Powers without delay.

Sazonoff agreed that Scutari must be surrendered, but implored Berchtold not to lose patience and act alone. He was ready for the occupation of Montenegrin ports by international troops, but he argued that they should not be landed before King Nicholas replied. The Austrian Ambassador in St. Petersburg suggested to his chief a time limit, to be followed if necessary by Austrian action. On April 27 Berchtold despatched a circular telegram announcing that Austria would act if the Powers did nothing, and complaining of Russian delays.<sup>2</sup> The meeting of the Ambassadors next day increased rather than diminished tension, for Mensdorff formally announced the decision of his Government. If Nicholas declined to surrender there should be a bombardment of one or more coast towns, an occupation of those districts, or even an expedition to Scutari. If the Conference failed to agree on the course of action, the Austrian Government reserved the right to take measures to carry out the decisions of Europe. His attitude was supported by Lichnowsky, and the Italian Ambassador pleaded for joint occupation of certain ports. The Entente Powers, on the other hand, declined to promise military co-operation, and continued to emphasise the danger of separate action. A deadlock had been reached, for the suggestion of financial or territorial compensation to Nicholas was rejected by Berchtold as beneath the dignity of the Powers.

The situation was so alarming that Berchtold summoned a Ministerial Council on May 2.<sup>3</sup> His four point programme—an independent Albania, the exclusion of Serbia from the

<sup>1</sup>A. VI, 203-5, 215.

<sup>2</sup>VI, 263-6, 275-7.

<sup>3</sup>VI, 324-37.

Adriatic, the limitation of her expansion to territory inhabited by Serbs, and compensation for Roumania—had seemed within sight of realization when the fall of Scutari upset his calculations. Scutari was the key to Austria's Balkan programme. Without it a healthy Albania was impossible. If Montenegro held it, Albania could not long retain her port of San Giovanni di Medua. Montenegro might transfer it to Serbia, even without a union of the Kingdoms. Nicholas was defying the Powers, the blockade had produced no result, and certain Powers refused to share in further coercion. Austria's position deteriorated from day to day. There was talk of territorial compensation for Montenegro at Albania's expense. The Pan-Slavs were busy; and England, hitherto so well disposed, was influenced by her friends of the Triple Entente. He had therefore informed Italy that, if Nicholas was unyielding and the Powers disunited, the only alternatives before Austria were war with Montenegro or military co-operation with Italy to enforce the evacuation of Scutari. Italy had accepted the latter on certain onerous conditions, but her press had spoken of a military expedition on her own account in view of the anarchy in Albania. It was impossible to forecast events. They had to reckon with the possibility and even probability of a conflict with Montenegro, in which Serbia might take part. The Ministers agreed that action, if possible with the co-operation of Italy, was essential, and it was decided to allot credits and to summon reserves. Austrian patience was clearly at an end.

The peace of Europe was hanging by a thread when on May 3, the day following the Ministerial Council, King Nicholas announced that he would yield. "Ma dignité et celle de mon peuple ne me permettant pas de me soumettre à une sommation isolée, je remets le sort de la ville de Scutari dans la main des Grandes Puissances." Grey told Mensdorff that he felt like a man awaking from a nightmare. Berchtold had played for high stakes and won. Had he lost he would not have regretted his decisions, and the majority of his countrymen would have backed him up. For the fate of Scutari was the symbol of a larger struggle. He had yielded on Djakova. A fresh surrender would have encouraged the enemies of Austria to believe that her day was done. Yet the strain had been terrible, and he vainly begged his master to allow him to resign.<sup>1</sup> His subordinate Szilassy draws a

<sup>1</sup> Musulin, *Das Hans am Ballplatz*, 191.

pathetic picture of a vacillating Foreign Minister, with the bellicose Conrad on one side of him and the pacific Francis Joseph on the other.<sup>1</sup>

## V

The approaching termination of the second Balkan War found the victors quarrelling over the spoils. Bulgaria was the storm centre, not only because her strength alarmed her allies, but because she had angry differences with her neighbours. She coveted Salonica, but the Greeks had arrived there first. She refused to cede Silistria to Roumania as compensation for her expansion. She thirsted for Macedonia, from which Servia had evicted the Turks. Austria's attitude to the conflict, if it came, was laid down in advance. The further aggrandisement of the two Serb kingdoms must so far as possible be prevented by moral support of Bulgaria; for, if she went down, Russian hegemony in the Balkans would be unchallenged and the threat to Austria's southern territories would increase.

The problem of compensation for Roumania had been referred by the Powers to an Ambassadors' Conference at St. Petersburg, since the London Conference had enough to do. The justice of her claim was generally admitted, for her neutrality made victory possible for the allies. Two practical problems, however, had to be faced. How much territory ought Bulgaria to cede? And, if she made a substantial sacrifice, should she receive compensation? With untiring energy Berchtold strove to secure Silistria for Roumania and Salonica for Bulgaria. He strove in vain, for Germany, the patron of Greece, frowned on the transfer of Salonica; and Bulgaria, flushed with victory over the Turks, declined to pay Roumania's bill. Yet, if he failed to secure compensation for his *protégé*, he could at any rate convince Sofia that Austria had tried her best. "Inform the Premier", he telegraphed to Sofia on April 16, "that we shall zealously support her aspirations, by direct negotiations with her allies or in the council of the Great Powers, and we shall accept no settlement which in our opinion does not do justice to Bulgarian interests."<sup>2</sup> His efforts seemed to evoke little response. In a despatch of May 10 he deplored the unwillingness of Gueshoff to meet Austria's wishes, namely to cultivate closer relations with Bucharest,

<sup>1</sup> Szilassy, *Der Untergang der Donau-Monarchie*, ch. 8.

<sup>2</sup> VI, 167-9, 409-12.

withdraw from the Balkan League, and pursue a course of more or less open antagonism to Russia.

A week later Berchtold expressed his belief that a conflict of Bulgaria with Servia and Greece was at hand. Austria should not stir up Bulgaria, but equally she should not leave her friendless before peace with Turkey was concluded and a settlement with Roumania reached.<sup>1</sup> An isolated Bulgaria would have to accept Russian proposals for a compromise with the allies and the continuation of the Balkan League. To save her from the Russian magnet she must be stiffened by an assurance of Austrian support, on condition that she did not play Russia's game and bore in mind Austria's relation to Bucharest. The growing probability of war with Servia drove her towards Vienna, but to Berchtold's regret Germany watched the new phase of the Balkan drama through different spectacles. A visit from Jagow failed to remove the differences. It was a gamble, argued the German Foreign Minister, to exchange an absolutely trustworthy Roumania for a very uncertain Bulgaria; and to abandon the hope of bringing Greece into the orbit of the Triple Alliance would be unwise.

Events were to prove how little the Wilhelmstrasse understood the mentality of the Balkan states. Berchtold continued to play the part of Bulgaria's patron, and he sharply complained when Roumania declared herself no longer content with Silistria.<sup>2</sup> "I consider this not only a deplorable lack of gratitude for the support of Austria and the Triple Alliance—the Triple Entente violently opposed the cession of Silistria—but also as entirely ignoring Bulgaria's readiness to purchase her friendship." His censorious attitude was hotly resented by Carol. Why, he asked, should Austria champion Roumania's rival and foe? Servia, with whom Roumania had no differences, should be strengthened as a make weight to Bulgaria. So incensed was the King that the Austrian Minister warned his chief not to draw the bow too tight. Berchtold was as anxious as anyone to retain the friendship of Roumania, but when Servia was in question he was hard as steel. He warned Bucharest that, in view of the rift between Austria and Servia, military co-operation with the latter in the event of a Serbo-Bulgar war (or with Greece, Servia's probable ally) would be incompatible with the alliance, since it would bring Roumania into open antagonism to the Monarchy.

<sup>1</sup> VI, 440-1, 467-8.

<sup>2</sup> VI, 488-90.



After prolonged discussions peace was signed between Turkey and the allies on May 30. On the same day Grey informed the Ambassadors' Conference that they had still to deal with the organisation of the Albanian state, the delimitation of its southern and south-eastern frontiers, and the future of the Aegean islands. But the task of the moment was to prevent the ex-allies flying at each other's throats. The sky darkened rapidly when, on May 25, Servia formally requested revision of the treaty of 1912, which Bulgaria was in no mood to grant. "The moment has come", observed Gueshoff to the Austrian Minister, "to ask you what Austria intends to do in the event of war between us and Servia.<sup>1</sup> Do you desire a strong and big Bulgaria, yes or no?" Berchtold answered that he hoped she would obtain her just claims by peaceful means, but Austria could do no more without a promise that Bulgaria would keep in step. Gueshoff, whose reserve excited suspicions, promised a reply in a few days, but his Ministry resigned and it fell to Daneff to answer the question. So long as the treaty with Servia lasted (and Bulgaria was now pressing for its fulfilment) he could not give assurances which conflicted with it. The outbreak of war would terminate its obligations. Berchtold's policy was not to avert a conflict but to prevent the aggrandisement of Servia if it came. The news of a Greco-Serb defensive alliance against Bulgaria, which reached Vienna on June 9, seemed to bring hostilities within sight. At this stage the Tsar appealed to King Ferdinand and King Peter to submit the dispute to his arbitration. Berchtold and Tisza denounced the invitation to a conference in St. Petersburg as unilateral action, suggesting a privileged position for Russia in the Balkans. Unlike Servia, Bulgaria refused unconditional acceptance, for the people, intoxicated by victory, was bent on war.

Berchtold defended his Balkan policy against Italian criticisms in a long despatch to Rome.<sup>2</sup> San Giuliano seemed to think that Austria had pressed Servia too hard, and that her hostility was the result. That was to confuse cause and effect. Not only her antagonism but her aims had been clearly revealed during the Bosnian crisis. She regarded the Austrian occupation of the provinces as temporary, and hoped for their ultimate union with herself. After this revelation Austria had to be on her guard. "We have no aggressive intentions against our South-Eastern neighbour, but so long as

<sup>1</sup> VI, 555-7, 561-2.

<sup>2</sup> VI, 739-42, 746-9, 762.

Servia's ultimate aim is to sever certain territories from the Monarchy, and so long as she is the mere tool of Pan-Slav ideas under the patronage of Russia, we must regard her as an antagonist and shape our conduct accordingly." The best counterweight would be a strong Bulgaria. Unfortunately the Emperor William detested King Ferdinand, and was bound by family ties to Roumania and Greece. If San Giuliano could modify the German attitude on Bulgaria, he would be grateful. As regards Bulgaria's danger from her northern neighbour, Berchtold approached Berlin directly, suggesting an identical communication at Bucharest. "If Roumania obstinately continues her present course and provokes a conflict, she must not expect protection after our warning." Germany replied that she could not exert pressure lest Roumania became completely estranged.

The long expected conflict began on June 30 with a Bulgarian attack on Servian and Greek forces in Macedonia. Berchtold's first reaction was to urge Bulgaria to substantial territorial concessions to Roumania. The second was to impress on Berlin the gravity of the situation.<sup>1</sup> Austria, he declared to the German Ambassador, could not hold her Southern Slav Provinces with an overgrown Servia as a neighbour. Though a Bulgarian victory was greatly to be desired, he telegraphed to Berlin, Servia might possibly win. Her victory would affect vital interests of the Monarchy, not only by the moral and material accession to her strength, but because it would stimulate propaganda for the Great Servian idea. "We should be driven to active intervention, in order to prevent a disproportionate strengthening of Servia." Roumania was not co-operating directly with her, but pressure on Bulgaria played straight into her hands. The mobilisation of her whole army was very dangerous. Bulgaria would either be driven to seek shelter under the wings of the Russian eagle or would collapse. The former would threaten the interests of the Triple Alliance; the latter would involve Austrian intervention in self-defence. Such intervention might cause Russia to follow suit and set Europe alight. After many warnings it was high time to explain to Roumania the danger of her course, and he hoped that Germany would promptly undertake the task.

Bethmann replied that such a step would do more harm than good. Austria's fears of a Great Servia were exaggerated.

<sup>1</sup> VI, 802-4, 825-6, 837-8. G.P. XXXV, 122-4.

He hoped that she would not intervene, for a European conflagration might result. In conversation with the Austrian Naval Attaché the Kaiser excitedly denounced the perfidy of Bulgaria in unleashing a new Balkan war, and hoped the Bulgarians would be thrashed. It would be a great mistake if Austria supported her against Servia and Roumania. Now was the time to reach a lasting agreement with the Serbs. King Carol deserved the utmost consideration for his long years of loyalty to the Triple Alliance, whereas no trust could be placed in the utterly unreliable Bulgarians. Italy was no less alarmed at the possibility of Austrian intervention, which, in San Giuliano's opinion, would be aggression and might provoke a European war.<sup>1</sup> Italy would fulfil her treaty obligations, but the Triple Alliance was purely for defence. At the Ambassadors' Conference on July 8, Grey suggested a declaration of non-intervention, but Berchtold declined on the ground that a binding declaration was inopportune when events were unpredictable.

Bulgaria quickly collapsed, for, in addition to her Greek and Servian foes, she had to confront a Roumanian invasion from the north and a Turkish raid on Adrianople. The defeat of Austria's *protégé* was bad enough, but a new danger now emerged. Perhaps Bulgaria, despite the conflict, might renew her alliance with Servia.<sup>2</sup> Austria still favoured her, but only on condition that no new alliance with Servia was made and that an understanding was reached with Roumania. Neither Gueshoff nor Daneff had fulfilled these conditions, and therefore Austria could only provide diplomatic support. Berchtold hoped that the errors of a Russophil policy would lead to an Austrophil Government. Before his telegram reached Sofia a new Ministry had been appointed under the Austrophil Radoslavoff. "Bulgaria's terrible situation to-day", he commented, "is above all due to her grave errors in regard to Roumania." He advised a twelfth hour agreement even at the cost of heavy sacrifices. King Ferdinand should appeal to King Carol to state his conditions for stopping the war.

Since Bulgaria offered no resistance, Roumania was not tempted to enlarge her territorial demands. The unopposed Turkish recovery of Adrianople, on the other hand, raised the question whether the Powers should intervene. Russia, declared Sazonoff to the Turkish Ambassador, would never

<sup>1</sup> VI, 881-3.

<sup>2</sup> VI, 902-3, 923, 941-2.

allow Turkey to reconquer territory inhabited by Christians, and Berchtold telegraphed to Constantinople that Austria could not accept a breach of the London terms.<sup>1</sup> At Grey's suggestion the Ambassador's Conference approved an identical *démarche* at Constantinople. No one supported Sazonoff so zealously as Berchtold, the champion of Bulgaria; but he was equally anxious for pressure at Athens and Belgrad. For him it was vital that Bulgaria should not be utterly crushed. Yet what chance was there of united action if Turkey turned a deaf ear? The Grand Vizier told the Austrian Ambassador that Turkey would not surrender Adrianople, even if Russian troops marched into Armenia. Sazonoff talked of a financial boycott and joint naval demonstrations, and told the Austrian Ambassador that the expulsion of the Turks from Adrianople must be enforced, if necessary by Russia alone. Her action would be confined to this purpose, for she had no territorial aims. Events, however, moved quickly, Europe was divided, and Turkey was firm. England and France disapproved the idea of Russian unilateral action as much as the Triple Alliance. The war sped to its close and Adrianople remained in Turkish hands.

Though Berchtold failed to save Bulgaria from the foes whom she made by her own follies, his efforts earned her gratitude. Whither, indeed, if not to Vienna, could Ferdinand look? Russia was now the patron of Belgrad, Germany the friend of Athens and Bucharest. The Western Powers and Italy were indifferent. On July 22 Radoslavoff proposed an alliance.<sup>2</sup> Now was the time, for public opinion had turned against Russia. Bulgaria would change her orientation, and an alliance with Roumania would form part of the plan. The Austrian Minister at Sofia believed that to reject the proffered hand would be a grave mistake. Russia was beginning to court Bulgaria again, and Austria should act at once. Berchtold wired back that the Bulgarophil policy pursued while Bulgaria possessed a Russophil Ministry would naturally be continued now that the necessity of a rapprochement was recognised. He approved the idea of an alliance in principle and welcomed the plan to make friends with Roumania. But arrangements of such importance could not be rushed, and Austria must first consult her allies. Meanwhile a full accord with Roumania should be made, which would be an excellent introduction to the larger project. The answer pleased

<sup>1</sup> VI, 1006.

<sup>2</sup> VI, 997-1002, 1009-10, 1027-9.

Bulgaria. Time was needed, but in the approaching Peace Conference she would appear, in company with Roumania, as belonging to the Triple Alliance group.

When the conflict was over, Berchtold sent an almost passionate appeal to Berlin to support the Bulgarian cause.<sup>1</sup> Of all Balkan problems, he argued, the Servian question was the most important for Austria, since a Great Servian solution would jeopardise her existence. Yet Berlin seemed to underestimate its significance. "The essence of the antagonism between us and Servia is that Servian policy, since the Radical party took office (and under foreign influence adopted the Great Servian idea as its governing political principle), aims at the union of all Serbs in the Serb state and therewith the separation of Austrian territories peopled by Serbs. This antagonism is permanent, for the realisation of the Great Servian idea, which would procure the coveted access to the sea, is no longer the programme of a party but the ideal of the whole people." The advice from Berlin—friendly political relations and an economic rapprochement—ignored the fundamental collision of interests. Servia would welcome such an attitude so long as it suited her purposes, but would merely utilise it to strengthen herself. Her aspirations would be no great danger if she stood alone, but she counted on the mighty Panslav sentiment in Russia to force the Tsar and his Government into the conflict. A Serb attack in the immediate future was improbable, but the collapse of Turkey brought it much nearer. The Balkan war had realised the first part of the programme by liberating Serbs under the Turkish yoke. As soon as they were digested, aspirations in the West would take shape. "To-day one can foresee that the Servian question will before very long involve an appeal to arms." Now was the time to withdraw Bulgaria from the Russian orbit: her support would be as useful to Germany as to Austria in a European war. In an accompanying private letter to the Ambassador Berchtold complained that Germany had abandoned the tacit understanding that the Balkan policy of the Central Powers was to be made in Vienna. Bulgaria's change of course under the new Ministry was welcome, replied Jagow, and he hoped it would be permanent.

The Treaty of Bucharest brought no comfort to Berchtold. The end of the crisis, he complained in a private letter to his Ambassador at Berlin, was still far away.<sup>1</sup> The defeat of

<sup>1</sup> VII, 1-9, 34-5.

<sup>2</sup> VII, 81-2.

Bulgaria, disappointing though it was, distressed him less than the attitude of his ally. Though Austria and Russia had supported Bulgarian claims to Cavalla, William II had secretly promised it to Greece. Such fundamental antagonism of policy might lead to the gravest consequences to the alliance. He now turned his energies to revision. On the day after the treaty was signed he sent a message that Cavalla was not the only matter in which Austria was interested.<sup>1</sup> The Bulgarian Foreign Minister, pointing in sorrow to the new map, declared that his hopes of modification lay in Austria. Yet what could she do? The Austrian Minister at Belgrad reported that the mere talk of revising the new frontiers to Servia's disadvantage had aroused passionate excitement. Then she was weak: to-day she was strong and victorious. She might even be so carried away by hatred that Austria would have to take up arms. There was, however, no real chance of revision, for outside Vienna and St. Petersburg it had few friends. French opinion, remarked Pichon drily, did not inquire whether the treaty was good or bad: it desired the end of the crisis.

The larger portion of the German press, complained Berchtold, including semi-official organs, denounced revision.<sup>2</sup> He assumed that this was the result, not of a *mot d'ordre*, but of utter ignorance of Austria's vital interests. Since such language inevitably encouraged her antagonists to resist her demands, he hoped the Wilhelmstrasse would intervene. It was too late, for revision was killed by an open telegram from the Kaiser to King Carol. The divergence between Vienna and Berlin was no longer a secret of the Chancelleries. All the world was now aware that Austria was the patron of Bulgaria, Germany of Roumania and Greece. As the Ballplatz saw it, Germany was playing Servia's game. Sazonoff's support of revision was too tepid to count. He wished Bulgaria to have Cavalla, but was content with her new frontier on the Servian side. King Carol, needless to say, opposed the modification of a settlement concluded under his auspices.

What was to be done? Tisza suggested Austrian consent to Russian action against Turkey in return for Russian approval of a modification of the new Bulgar-Serb frontier.<sup>3</sup> When the German Ambassador was instructed to urge the dropping of revision, Berchtold complained that Austria's interests had been ignored at Bucharest. A Great Servia had been erected

<sup>1</sup> VII, 88-90, 92-4, 97.

<sup>2</sup> VII, 102.

<sup>3</sup> VII, 112-6.

extending far beyond her ethnic claims. It was regrettable that German diplomacy had fostered instead of hindering this process. Germany was blind to the perils gathering in the south which would one day affect her as much as Austria. Tschirschky admitted the danger but argued that revision would mean war, since neither Serbia nor Greece would surrender territory. Was a small frontier modification in favour of Bulgaria worth a European war? Russia, replied Berchtold, would not intervene to prevent it. In any case she must not be allowed to appear Bulgaria's only patron. If she moved against Turkey on behalf of Bulgaria, Austria might also move.

The treaty was not likely to inaugurate a long period of peace, telegraphed Berchtold to St. Petersburg, for Bulgaria was humiliated out of all proportion to her victories over Turkey and her ethnic claims.<sup>1</sup> The new Serb-Bulgar frontier involved a permanent threat to Sofia, and the exclusion of Bulgaria from Macedonia would not make for peace. If Austria and Russia agreed on revision and took a strong line, the other Powers would not oppose. Berchtold, however, was wasting his time, for Sazonoff had joined the anti-revisionist camp. Only on Adrianople, which formed no part of the treaty, was he tempted to stand firm, and even here his mood soon changed. By the end of August Berchtold confessed to his master that revision was impossible.

## VI

The Treaty of Bucharest stood firm, for the gladiators were weary of the fray. Yet nobody believed that it would last. Bulgaria's resentment was fierce and unconcealed. Her aspirations, explained her Foreign Minister, were directed not towards Thrace but towards Macedonia. The conflict would come within ten years. Deeply convinced of the intransigence of Serbia, all the more since her resounding victories, Berchtold continued his policy of favouring the only Balkan state whose interests coincided with those of Austria. That his allies shared neither his hostility to Belgrad nor his affection for Sofia made no difference to his attitude. At this period he was a lonely man. Continually attacked in the Austrian press and society for his so-called indolence

<sup>1</sup> VII, 121-3, 219-21.

and inclination to let matters drift, he retained his position by the favour of his master alone.<sup>1</sup>

The first task was to secure the evacuation of Albania. The southern frontiers had still to be fixed, but those of the north and east were agreed when Austria yielded on Djakova. Berchtold's annoyance at the continued presence of Servian troops turned to anger as the months dragged on. If the Powers could co-operate, all the better: if not, he was determined to act alone. Polite representations from Vienna produced no effect in Belgrad, where it was urged that the troops must remain till order was restored and a gendarmerie in being. The obvious procedure was by a joint *démarche*, but unanimity proved impossible. The Russian Minister was merely authorised to convey a friendly suggestion, while the British Minister desired to postpone action till the Russian and French representatives received identical instructions. When Russia was pressed to join in a collective *démarche*, she replied that the situation was not serious enough for such a step. She would, however, take part in identic separate representations if Serbia proved intransigent.

On September 23 Serbia announced that she had begun to withdraw her troops.<sup>2</sup> They had been left, it was explained, merely to prevent Albanian raids on her territory. Armed bands were attacking Servian troops and officials, a large scale invasion of Servian territory was being organised, and Albanian residents in Serbia were being stimulated to take part in the coming revolt. If the frontier troubles increased, Serb troops would be ordered to reoccupy certain strategic points. On receiving this alarming Memorandum Berchtold sent a circular telegram to the Powers. These military measures, he declared, indicated a major action against Albania. The revolt in the territories allotted to Serbia was provoked by the misdeeds of her officials. Inhabitants of autonomous Albania had only taken part in districts occupied by the Serbs in defiance of the London decisions, or on account of the closing of the markets of Dibra and Djakova. The German and Italian Ministers in Belgrad, he suggested, should urge the Government to respect the frontiers and the neutrality of autonomous Albania and to reopen access to the

<sup>1</sup> G. and T. X, part I, 18-20. Cartwright's report, September 27. The French Ambassador's despatch of September 7 mentions a rumour that he might be succeeded by Czernin, a protégé of Francis Ferdinand. D.D.F. VIII, 153-4.

<sup>2</sup> A. VII, 331-2, 344-5.



markets. The Italian reply was not encouraging. San Giuliano did not believe that Serbia intended to attack Albania. It would be enough for the Powers to remind her in a friendly way of the unanimous desire of Europe that the decisions of the Ambassadors' Conference should be respected.

Berchtold made a final effort to rally his allies.<sup>1</sup> Serbia's determination to re-occupy Albanian territory was clear. It would be more than a violation of the London decrees, for it would threaten Durazzo and the coast. Previous joint *démarches* having produced no result, she must be warned. The Cabinets of Rome, Berlin and Bucharest were invited to co-operate, and the Austrian Minister at Belgrad was instructed to proceed if none of his colleagues received instructions by October 1. Germany was willing if Italy consented, but as the latter held aloof Austria acted alone. The attention of the Servian Government was drawn to the very serious consequences of military action against Albania, which would infringe the decisions of the London Conference. The interim Foreign Minister replied stiffly that the repulse of the Albanians might perhaps necessitate a slight advance across the frontier.

On October 3 the situation was reviewed in a Ministerial Council at Vienna.<sup>2</sup> If Serbia occupied strategic points in Albania, argued Berchtold, Austria would either have to accept her absorption of the country or to launch an ultimatum. She had no longer to reckon with a dying Turkey and relatively weak Christian states, but with powerful military communities. The Balkan League might conceivably be renewed with a point against Austria, Serbia buying Bulgarian support with portions of Macedonia. Passing from the Balkan outlook to the European situation he spoke hopefully of the present and doubtfully of the future. The differences with Germany were neither grave nor lasting. Relations with Italy had improved. All through the Eastern crisis England had played a helpful part. London and Berlin were on better terms. Russia and France for the moment needed peace. On the other hand the armament fever which had seized France and Germany showed that the day of reckoning was only postponed. French capital was working in the Balkans to paralyse Austria's strength in the hour of decision. No immediate conflict was probable, but the army should be developed up to the financial limit.

Pasitch visited Berchtold on October 3 and spoke in the

<sup>1</sup> VII, 368-9, 375-6, 387-90.

<sup>2</sup> VII, 397-403.

friendliest terms.<sup>1</sup> The surrender of the Sanjak had smoothed the way for a rapprochement. The Albanian revolt would soon be suppressed. Serbia had no designs on the territory of Albania, with whom she desired to live in peace. The tariff was the key to the restoration of Austro-Serb harmony. Berchtold was not impressed. On October 7 he sent a message to Belgrad. The Albanian revolt in Serbia was so nearly suppressed that the Servian army was close to the frontier. To cross it would lead to the gravest consequences. This warning produced the assurance that the frontier would be respected and that any small advance for military reasons would be provisional. Deeds spoke louder than words, and on the following day Berchtold wired to Berlin that troops were advancing into Albanian territory. The Powers, he suggested, should warn Belgrad, each in its own way. On October 14 he telegraphed to inquire whether Serbia would withdraw. Even a provisional occupation, he added, was incompatible with the London settlement, respect for which Austria was determined to secure by all fitting means. The Servian Minister in Vienna was informed that it was not bluff.

The reply was unsatisfactory.<sup>2</sup> The tone, reported the Austrian Minister at Belgrad, left no doubt that Pasitch relied on the aid of certain Powers. Orders to cease the advance had already been sent, declared the Premier. When the troops would be recalled would depend on events in Albania. While Albanian bands stood ready for the fray it was impossible. The frontier would be settled by the Commission in such a way as to obtain security. Its task, replied the Austrian Minister, was not to alter the frontiers agreed in London but, so to speak, to set up the frontier posts. In reporting the declarations of Pasitch, the Minister added that Serbia would only yield to force or threats.

The time had come to act, explained Berchtold to Berlin on October 16.<sup>3</sup> Encouraged by the Hartwig-Iswoisky group Serbia was attempting to confront the Powers with a *fait accompli*. "If we allow ourselves to be caught in the net, we should not only sacrifice the independent Albania for which we have worked so hard, but compromise our prestige in the Balkans and the Southern Slav world." Next day, with the full approval of the Emperor, the long expected ultimatum was announced. "Le Gouvernement Impérial et Royal se plaît à espérer que le

<sup>1</sup> VII, 425-7, 413-4, 422-3, 428, 435.

<sup>2</sup> VII, 451-7.

<sup>3</sup> VII, 442-5.

Gouvernement Serbe ne tardera pas à procéder à l'évacuation intégrale du territoire albanais dans un délai de huit jours. Au cas contraire, le Gouvernement Impérial et Royal se verrait à son grand regret dans la nécessité d'avoir recours aux moyens propres à assurer la réalisation de sa demande." The ultimatum was communicated to the Powers in a circular despatch recalling the patience of the Ballplatz and the intransigence of Belgrad. Austria's unilateral action was criticised by all the Great Powers except Germany, but a dangerous crisis was averted by prompt surrender. Where polite appeals to respect the decisions of Europe had produced no effect, the threat of action by a single Power sufficed. Yet it was but a fleeting triumph, a round in an unfinished game. Both Austria and Servia were convinced that war was only a matter of time.

Shortly after this alarming incident William II unbosomed himself to Conrad at the centenary celebrations of the battle of Leipzig and, a few days later, to Berchtold at Vienna.<sup>1</sup> What could be done, he inquired, to prevent future trespasses? Austrian policy, replied the Foreign Minister, aimed at playing off the Balkan states against one another in order that each might hold the rest in check. A Serbo-Bulgar rapprochement, which could only take place at Austria's expense, must be averted. Bulgaria was angling for an alliance, which would be acceptable if it did not affect the relations between Vienna and Bucharest. At this point the Kaiser explained his views. The power of the Slavs, and in particular of the Slav states in the Balkans, had increased in a formidable degree. War between East and West was ultimately inevitable, and in such an event a Servian attack might be disastrous. The Slavs were born to serve, not to rule. The only possible relation to Servia and Austria was that of the dependence of the lesser on the greater, like a planet on the sun. She should be attracted by money, military training and commercial privileges. On the other hand Servian troops must be placed at the disposition of Austria, so that no danger to her southern frontier could occur. When Berchtold suggested that the *ineradicable animosity* of the Serb race was an obstacle, the *Kaiser rejoined that Servia would be ready to place her army under Austrian control in return for defence against attack*. If she declined, force should be applied. "If His Majesty the Emperor Francis Joseph makes a demand, the Servian

<sup>1</sup> Conrad, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit*, III, 469-70; A. VII, 512-5, October 26.

Government must obey. If not, Belgrad must be bombarded and occupied till his will is fulfilled. And rest assured that I am behind you, and am ready to draw the sword whenever your action requires." As he uttered these swelling words, his hand moved to the hilt of his sword. Berchtold protested that the obligation to defend Serbia might drag Austria into controversies which did not affect her interest. After discussing the relations of the Central Powers to Turkey and Bulgaria, the Kaiser declared that Russia, though hostile, could not fight for six years. If war were to come, Austria could absolutely rely upon him. Whatever the Ballplatz decided was for him a command. This emphasis on the solidarity of the alliance, concluded Berchtold's report, ran like a scarlet thread through his declarations. The interviews with Conrad and the Foreign Minister in October 1913 can hardly have been without influence in the decisions of the following summer.

## VII

The relations between Vienna and St. Petersburg improved during the winter of 1913, and the Liman Mission diverted Sazonoff's anger to Berlin. On January 3, 1914, he spoke cheerfully to Thurn, the departing Austrian Ambassador.<sup>1</sup> Now that the Balkan questions were solved he saw no reason why they should not be on good terms. In a farewell audience the Tsar remarked that the Ambassador left the situation greatly improved. His successor, Szapary, agreed. The general feeling for peace since the close of the Balkan wars, he reported, was shared by Russia. Austria should encourage this sentiment without suggesting that her need for co-operation was the greater. She might well be of service in Russia's dealings with Asia Minor or the Straits. The stronger she became, the less likely was Russia to encourage trouble in the Near East.

Szapary's first interview with Sazonoff on February 15 was eminently satisfactory.<sup>2</sup> The difficulties and misunderstandings had gone, declared the Foreign Minister cheerfully, and he saw no point of divergence. The Tsar was as well *disposed as himself*. *Unfriendly press utterances should not be taken too seriously*. Russia had immense internal tasks to fulfil. The European situation was on the whole good. The

<sup>1</sup> VII, 705-7, 711.

<sup>2</sup> VII, 904-6, 896-7, 913-6.

most difficult aspects of the Albanian question had been solved. A few days later the Ambassador was received by the Tsar. There was a most decided intention to turn over a new leaf, he wrote to his chief. The Tsar had been extraordinarily gracious. Even old Goremykin, Kokovtsoff's feeble successor as President of the Council, had tried to be pleasant. On the other hand the first Incident would destroy this friendliness in a night. Pourtalès witnessed the friendly reception of the newcomer with a touch of envy, but he realised that it was too good to last. "Believe me", he remarked in a warning voice, "you will have great difficulties to overcome." After a pleasant talk with Berchtold the Russian Charge reported that the relations of the Governments were thoroughly correct, but that public opinion was increasingly mistrustful.<sup>1</sup>

The *détente* with Russia was the only bit of blue sky which met Berchtold's eyes in the opening months of 1914. His Albanian *protégé*, ushered into the world with such peril and pain, proved a sickly infant. Its ruler, the Prince of Wied, was not the man for the job. Sitting in his palace at Durazzo without an army and without cash, ready at any moment to take refuge on board a vessel in the harbour, he was rather a prisoner than a sovereign. Italy gave no assistance to the little state, and Greece pegged out claims in the south. The experiment, it was generally felt, was likely to fail. In Belgrad the prospects were no brighter. After the ultimatum of October 1913 Austro-Serb relations were as bad as they could be without war. The gloves were off. Territorial aspirations at the expense of the Monarchy were boldly expressed. The advanced age of King Nicholas and the unpopularity of his eldest son threatened a union of the two states which would automatically bring Servia to the coast. There was also talk of the marriage of Crown Prince Alexander to a daughter of the Tsar, and it was realised that renewed coercion of Servia would mean war if a Russian princess shared the throne.

Despite the mending of the wires to Sofia when Radoslavoff succeeded Daneff in July 1913, no real advance was made during the following year. The offer of an alliance was neither accepted nor rejected, Berchtold repeatedly pointing out that a Bulgar-Roumanian rapprochement must come first. The condition, however reasonable in theory, could not be fulfilled, for Ferdinand and his people were bent on revenge. A further

<sup>1</sup> *Imperialismus*, I, 342-3, February 26, 1914.

obstacle was the ineradicable distrust of the foxy King at Berlin. For a time it seemed likely that Bulgaria and Turkey would join hands, but the prolonged negotiations at Constantinople, warmly favoured by Austria, came to nothing. Bulgaria was not ready for another round, and she was afraid of being drawn into the Turco-Greek conflict expected in the summer of 1914. While Berchtold's sympathies were with Bulgaria and Turkey, the smiles of William II were reserved for the Hohenzollern Queen at Athens and the Hohenzollern King at Bucharest.

Worst of all the knots in the tangled skein which it was Berchtold's task to unravel was the estrangement of Roumania. King Carol's loyalty was beyond question, but he was growing old. The alliance with the Central Powers, renewed once again in February, 1913,<sup>1</sup> was such a secret that only the successive Premiers were informed. Berchtold's tenderness to Bulgaria during the Balkan wars was sharply resented, and his hostility to Servia was never shared at Bucharest. More important, because more lasting, was the indignation of Roumanians at the treatment of their brothers in Hungary. Nationalist sentiment was growing apace throughout Europe, and every dissatisfied country longed to throw down the partitions dividing the members of a single race. Roumania cast covetous glances at Bessarabia, Transylvania and Bukowina. The first belonged to Russia, the second and third to the Hapsburgs. Which was the greater prize? The answer was easy. More could be won from Austria than from Russia. Yet Austria did not stand alone, and war with the Central Powers would be a terrible risk. Roumania's dependence on Vienna was at an end, but the time to bind herself to Russia had not come.

Amongst the eleven thousand items in the official collection of Austrian documents from 1908 to 1914 none are more arresting than the reports of Count Ottokar Czernin to his chief, for rarely does a diplomatist employ terms of such passionate appeal. Appointed to Bucharest in November 1913, the new Minister carried with him elaborate instructions.<sup>2</sup> His duty was to remove misunderstandings by explaining Austria's conduct in the Balkan wars, and to clear up the relations of the two countries. Austria had proved herself a loyal ally: without her Roumania would be at the mercy of Russia and her Slav *protégés*. Tisza was ready for a friendly

<sup>1</sup> Pribram, *The Secret Treaties of Austria-Hungary*, I, 260-73.   <sup>2</sup> VII, 588-94.

arrangement in Hungary, but no external interference in domestic affairs could be allowed. The most difficult aspect of the problem, continued the Memorandum, was Roumania's co-operation with Servia. Bucharest appeared or pretended to be unaware of the nature and degree of the Austro-Serb antagonism. "Moderation, goodwill, economic and political favours are recommended to us. Such palliatives are useless for the purpose. Between us and Servia to-day stands the great Southern Slav problem, which increasingly clamours for a definitive solution. In view of the unflinching consistency and self-confidence with which she works for the realisation of the Great Servian idea, this solution, so far as one can foresee, must be by force. Either there will be very little left of Servia, or Austria will be shaken to her foundations. That our antagonism will be softened or removed in course of time is out of the question. If it is believed in Bucharest that Roumania could witness such a conflict with folded arms despite her alliance with the Monarchy, they forget that Servia would not attempt the solution of the Great Servian problem alone, but only when assured of the active support of Russia or in the event of an Austro-Russian war arising from other causes." The alliance offered no guarantee that Roumania would fulfil her obligations, for it was unknown to her people. The time had come for the fact—not the articles—of the partnership to be revealed.

Czernin's first interview with the King, friendly in tone though it was, revealed the difficulties.<sup>1</sup> Carol complained of the treatment of the Roumanians in Transylvania, defended the recent conduct of Servia in Albania, and expressed the opinion that another war with Bulgaria would occur in five or six years. The Minister felt that he desired the part of Arbiter of the Balkans, which might or might not coincide with Austrian interests. A week later he reported his general impression of the situation. The King could never act against public opinion, and public opinion had changed. It was not the attitude of Austria in the question of revision which rankled, but the sins of Hungary, which were now bearing fruit in Roumanian irredentism. The publication of the alliance was impracticable without the solution of the Hungarian question and a total change of opinion in Roumania. In a word, the fate of Austria's relations to Roumania would be decided in Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> VII, 597-600, November 30; 609-14, December 5.

Czernin followed up his official despatch by a letter describing a second audience with the King.<sup>1</sup> Roumania, declared Carol, would never fight against the Monarchy, but to fight on its side was at present impossible. As King he could say nothing of Hungary's domestic politics, but as a private individual he must remark that the root of the trouble was in Transylvania. Roumanians could not understand how three and a half million of their race could be treated with so little consideration. Admiring as he did the character and statesmanlike qualities of Tisza, he hoped that he would take the necessary steps. When the audience was over and Czernin had reached the door, the King called him back and begged him to use his utmost endeavours to end a situation as painful as it was dangerous for both states. Summarising his conversations with the ruler and statesmen of both parties, Czernin argued that the twelfth hour had arrived. "The fact is that the treaty of alliance is worth scarcely more than the paper on which it was written, that we cannot count on Roumania's military support, and that the estrangement will rapidly increase unless the Hungarian question is quickly solved. Thus we stand at the parting of the ways and must decide whether to go right or left. We must either try to recapture Roumania or we must let her go." Berchtold replied that the status of Roumanians in Hungary was certainly no worse than when the treaty was renewed a year before, but he agreed that the request for publication must be postponed.

Longer experience merely confirmed the pessimism of the opening weeks, and Bratiano's accession to office made things worse. Early in 1914 Czernin called for reports from the Austrian Consuls in Roumania.<sup>2</sup> He had commissioned them in order to test his own judgment, but they were so remarkable that he forwarded them to his chief. "One thing is certain. Things cannot remain as they are. This vague and morbid relationship can only be a stage, as in every illness, to be followed by death or recovery." Roumanians, he believed, did not desire to march straight into the Russian camp. They preferred the existing twilight, in which they could rely on Austrian support while Austria could no longer count on theirs. Bratiano uttered sugary phrases, but he was thoroughly false. His policy was to hold on to Austria till he needed her no more. The King was old beyond his years and was losing grip. The masterful wife of his feeble heir was a

<sup>1</sup> VII, 626-9, 664-5.

<sup>2</sup> VII, 951-7.



Russian princess. "We are sliding downhill at terrible speed. There is no time to lose. The treaty is a mere scrap of paper. Roumania will not join the Monarchy in war. The present relationship is the worst conceivable, for it binds but does not help us. Only an iron resolve to make Roumania show her colours can avert incalculable disaster at the twelfth hour." Czernin's recipe was to reveal the alliance by an "indiscretion."

Berchtold's reply was in a different key.<sup>1</sup> Clarification was indeed desirable, but the hour had not arrived. "We must continue to strive for the restoration of trustful relations, despite all difficulties, till we are convinced of its futility or are able to find full compensation for the loss of Roumania elsewhere." Bulgaria required time for convalescence, her Austrophil Ministry might not last, and she was distrusted at Berlin. Though the situation was dangerous, the pace could not be forced. Friendly representations from Berlin were more likely to produce effect than from Vienna. The Hungarian Government earnestly desired to smoothe out the differences with its Roumanian subjects, and its efforts were not bound to fail. From German sources he heard that King Carol was master in his own house and could be relied on to do his duty as an ally.

This complacent despatch filled the man on the spot with something like despair. Though, as he confessed, he had not the slightest hope of convincing his chief, he proceeded to reiterate his arguments.<sup>2</sup> Fine phrases concealed ugly facts, for the King himself had said that in existing circumstances Roumania could not fight on the Austrian side. That Berlin could redress the balance was an illusion. Most Roumanians, expecting an Austro-Russian war, desired to keep a free hand, to intervene on the winning side, and to secure either Transylvania or Bessarabia as the prize. "I have been sent here at no wish of my own," concluded Czernin. "It is the beginning and the end of my diplomatic career. Personally I have nothing to gain or to lose. I could never forgive myself for not having sounded the warning signal in good time." Berchtold replied in a private letter that the gravity of the situation was fully realised at Vienna, but he was more hopeful as to the intervention of the Kaiser. Till the Russo-Japanese war, he continued, fear of Russia was the dominating factor in Roumania's policy. Since Russia's defeat in the Far East the fear of Bulgaria had taken its place. Her Bulgaro-

<sup>1</sup> VII, 1006-9, March 26.

<sup>2</sup> VII, 1,022-6, 1,041-4.

phobia had not been seriously diminished by the latest Balkan war. That Austria afforded diplomatic assistance to Bulgaria as well as to Roumania had created a profound suspicion which it had proved impossible to remove. Indeed it was generally believed, perhaps even by King Carol himself, that a treaty existed between Austria and Bulgaria. How could this suspicion be destroyed? In answering his own question Berchtold suggested a possible advance. At some appropriate opportunity Czernin might ask what Roumania would offer if Austria guaranteed her new frontiers, and might tactfully suggest the publication of the alliance as a *quid pro quo*.

On April 22 Czernin carried out his instructions in a frank talk with the King.<sup>1</sup> The situation, he began, was unhealthy. The sentiment of the people, expressed in many ways, confirmed His Majesty's recent admission that he could not override public opinion. The King, showing signs of embarrassment, asked what conclusions were being drawn at Vienna. Speaking as a private individual Czernin reiterated that the situation should be cleared up. Distrust was growing on both sides, and one day they would find they were enemies without knowing why. So long as he lived, interjected the King, he would do his utmost to prevent Roumania taking the field against Austria. The alliance, retorted Czernin, demanded more than that. Could His Majesty declare that he and his army would fight on Austria's side? Carol evaded the question. He hoped that there would be no more war for a long time, and that meanwhile popular sentiment would improve. At this point the Minister, remarking that Bulgaria was the apple of discord, suggested the addition of a clause to the treaty by which Austria would guarantee Roumania's new frontiers. The treaty could then be published, and every Roumanian would see that Austria was on his side. Carol welcomed a guarantee but pleaded for the maintenance of secrecy. There was little in all this to dispel anxiety at Vienna. The King was loyal, commented Berchtold, but he evidently dreaded a clarification, partly owing to the sentiment of his people, partly in order not to endanger his favourite double game with Russia. A first-rate diplomatist, he had not said No. But to reopen the matter would either annoy him or encourage him to raise his terms.

While Berchtold held his hand, the current of events was bearing Roumania rapidly away from her old moorings.

<sup>1</sup> VII, 1073-9, 1092-3, VIII, 13-5.

More persuasive than Czernin's pleadings was the journey of the Tsar and his family to Constanza at the opening of June. It was in vain that Carol and Bratiano explained that it was a mere visit of courtesy, for Sazonoff spent two days in Bucharest.<sup>1</sup> The Russian Minister, declared Bratiano soothingly, was bent on peace, and he had no fear of trouble with Austria except in the event of an Austro-Serb conflict. That deeds speak louder than words was the comment of Czernin in a letter to his chief. It was unlikely that positive engagements had been made, but the new orientation towards the Triple Entente was completed. "From the day of the visit all Roumania reckons with a new policy. That was the Russian intention, and therein lies its significance." The change was not entirely due to the old hatred for Budapest and the new hatred for Vienna. Austria's passive attitude during the Balkan wars suggested that the realm of the Hapsburgs was doomed to dissolution. The advice of France and Russia to Roumania was to leave the sinking ship and to secure Transylvania in due course. A ring was being drawn round the Monarchy in broad daylight; a new Balkan League was being formed under Russo-French patronage. In co-operation with Berlin, and preferably through Berlin, Roumania should be forced to declare herself. It was the old story of the Sibylline books. Every week, every day, was a loss of precious time.

Berchtold was converted at last, for the Tsar's visit to Constanza filled the cup. Though he said nothing, reported the Russian Ambassador, he concealed his resentment with difficulty.<sup>2</sup> The situation was exhaustively surveyed in a Foreign Office Memorandum, dated June 24, intended for Berlin.<sup>3</sup> The balance-sheet, it stated, was unsatisfactory for Austria and the Triple Alliance. There were indeed two entries on the credit side. An independent Albania had been created as a barrier to the advance of Servia, and Bulgaria had escaped from Russian control. On the debit side were the virtual disappearance of Turkey from Europe, the unexpected aggrandisement of Servia, the Serbo-Roumanian co-operation arising from the third Balkan war, and the shift of Roumania towards the Russian camp. Indeed there was even a possibility that the latter might join in war against the Triple Alliance. Now that the Turk was gone, Russia and France

<sup>1</sup> VIII, 131-5, 151-2, 168-9, 173-16.

<sup>2</sup> A, VIII, 186-95.

<sup>3</sup> *Imperialismus*, III, 260.

were striving to construct a new Balkan League directed against Austria. The chief obstacle to such a scheme, namely the Serbo-Bulgar antagonism, might be overcome by Serbia obtaining Bosnia and conceding a portion of the coveted Macedonia.

The conversion of Roumania, continued the Memorandum, was admittedly a very striking success for Franco-Russian diplomacy. An open and complete transfer of allegiance had not taken place, for the alliance and the loyalty of King Carol stood in the way. But large circles of the army, the Intelligentsia and the people were converted to the new orientation and dreamed of Transylvania. The King would strive to prevent his country joining in a war against Austria so long as he lived, but that Roumania would defend her ally against a Russian attack was too much to hope. The present situation, in which Austria could not even be sure of the neutrality of Bucharest in an Austro-Russian war, was a danger, for it prevented her striking out a new path. She had hitherto followed Germany's advice to go slow, on the ground that the trouble arose from misunderstandings during the recent conflict and would pass away. This policy had failed. Austria could not look on with folded hands while a new Balkan League was being forged for her destruction; yet she could not act till she knew where Roumania stood. A simple but searching test must be applied: Would she reveal the existence of the alliance? A satisfactory response should be facilitated by an Austrian guarantee of Roumanian territory against Bulgarian attack; and if Roumania stressed her friendship for Serbia, Austria would meet a changed attitude on the part of the latter by political and economic concessions. Further than that she could not go. If Roumania opted for Russia, Austria should promptly accept Bulgaria's offer of an alliance, secure the completion of the much discussed Turco-Bulgar pact, and fortify her eastern frontiers. Before, however, the decisive question was put to Bucharest, Germany must be consulted and fully approve. Weighty issues were at stake, and success was only possible if the co-ordinated action of France and Russia on the one side was balanced by unified action of Austria and Germany on the other. Between June 24 and 28 this impressive Memorandum was carefully revised by the Foreign Minister. Before it was despatched an event occurred which was to change the face of the world. Roumania faded out of the picture, and Serbia took her place.

## VIII

The Serajevo murders of June 28 convinced Austria of the necessity of an appeal by arms if the consent of Germany could be obtained. In the words of Conrad it was Serbia's declaration of war and could be answered by war alone.<sup>1</sup> Berchtold's first task was to add a postscript to the lengthy Memorandum.<sup>2</sup> "The foregoing was just completed when the terrible events at Serajevo occurred. The full significance of the foul murder cannot at present be gauged. There, however, is the indubitable proof, if such were required, of the fact that the gulf between the Monarchy and Serbia cannot be bridged, and of the danger and uncompromising intensity of the Great Servian activities. Austria has displayed no lack of goodwill and consideration in order to establish tolerable relations with Serbia. It is now clear that these efforts were entirely fruitless, and that the Monarchy must continue to reckon with her obstinate, irreconcilable and aggressive hostility. All the more peremptory is the need for the Monarchy with unflinching hand to tear asunder the threads which its foes are endeavouring to weave into a net above its head." The Foreign Minister was at last converted to Conrad's gospel of a preventive war.

The revised Memorandum was accompanied by an autograph letter from Francis Joseph to William II.<sup>3</sup> After thanking his ally for his sympathy, the Emperor analysed the situation and announced his intentions. "The attack on my poor nephew is the direct result of the agitation of Russian and Servian Panslavs, the sole aim of which is the weakening of the Triple Alliance and the dissolution of my Empire. The bloody deed was not the work of a single individual, but a well organised plot whose threads extend to Belgrad. Though it may be impossible to establish the complicity of the Servian Government, no one can doubt that its policy of uniting all Southern Slavs under the Servian flag encourages such crimes, and that the continuation of this situation is a chronic peril for my House and my territories." The danger was enhanced by the fact that Roumania, despite her alliance, had made close friends with Serbia. Representations were no longer of use. She could only be retained for the Triple Alliance if the creation of a Balkan League under Russian

<sup>1</sup> *Aus meiner Dienstzeit*, IV, 17-18.

<sup>2</sup> VIII, 250-2.

<sup>3</sup> VIII, 253-61, July 2.

patronage were prevented by winning Bulgaria for the Triple Alliance, and if Roumania were made to understand that the friends of Servia could not be the friends or allies of Austria. "The aim of my Government in future must be the isolation and diminution of Servia." The first stage should be the strengthening of the existing Bulgarian Government. If Bucharest realised that the Triple Alliance would stick to Bulgaria, while persuading her to ally herself with Roumania and guaranteeing the integrity of the latter, the perilous course recently adopted might perhaps be changed. If this succeeded, an attempt could be made to reconcile Greece with Bulgaria and Turkey. Thus a new Balkan League would arise under the patronage of the Triple Alliance, with the object of stemming the Panslav tide and securing peace for its members. This would only be possible if Servia ceased to count. "After the terrible event in Bosnia, you too will be convinced that a healing of the antagonism which divides us from Servia is out of the question, and that the pacific policy of all the European monarchs will be threatened so long as this nest of criminal agitation in Belgrad remains unpunished."

The Foreign Office Memorandum and the autograph letter were taken to Berlin by Count Hoyos, and on the evening of July 5 a telegram from the Austrian Ambassador reported satisfactory results.<sup>1</sup> Austria, declared the Kaiser, could count on his support, and no doubt Bethmann would share his view. The action against Servia should be undertaken without delay. Of course Russia would object, but he had been prepared for that for years. If it came to war, Germany, with her usual loyalty, would stand by her ally. Russia was not ready, and she would think twice before appealing to arms. If Austria were convinced of the necessity of attacking Servia, he would regret if the favourable moment were lost. He would see that Roumania behaved herself, and he did not object to a treaty with Bulgaria so long as it had no point against Bucharest. On the following day, July 6, a second telegram reported equally satisfactory assurances from the Chancellor.

The next stage on the road that Berchtold had mapped out was to secure the assent of his colleagues. At a Ministerial Council on July 7 he argued that the moment had come to render Servia for ever incapable of harm.<sup>2</sup> Such a blow could not be struck without diplomatic preparation. He had

<sup>1</sup> VIII, 306-7, 319-20.

<sup>2</sup> VIII, 343-51.

consulted Berlin and received a promise of unconditional support. A conflict with Servia might involve war with Russia. But Russia was working for a Balkan League, including Roumania, to launch against Austria at a suitable moment. The position of the latter was bound to grow worse. A passive attitude would be interpreted by her Roumanian and Southern Slav subjects as a sign of weakness. The logic of the situation was to anticipate the blow.

A warning voice was promptly raised by the strongest figure in the Hapsburg Empire. As early as July 1, after learning Berchtold's intention to use the Serajevo murders as a battle cry, Tisza sent a Memorandum to the Emperor expressing his emphatic dissent. He now renewed his protest. He would never consent to a surprise attack, which would produce the worst impression in Europe and would probably involve the enmity of all the Balkan states except Bulgaria, who was too weak to be of much use. Austria's demands—severe but not impossible—should be formulated, and an ultimatum should not be sent till they were declined. If they were accepted, she would score heavily. If not, he was ready for war. Servia should lose territory but not be wiped out, partly because Russia would fight to the death to prevent it, and partly because, as Hungarian Premier, he could never allow the Monarchy to annex part of Servia. He was not convinced of the necessity of war. Troops would have to watch the Roumanian frontier. Now that Germany had approved co-operation between Bulgaria and the Triple Alliance, Bulgaria and Turkey would balance Servia and Roumania, and thereby compel the latter to return to the fold.

The history of recent years, rejoined Berchtold, had shown that diplomatic successes had enhanced the prestige of the Monarchy for a time, but that the tension itself had been increased. Austria's success in the Bosnian crisis, in the creation of Albania, and in the autumn of 1913 left the situation unchanged. A radical solution of the Great Servia problem required energetic action. Roumania would become more hostile, not less. After the Austrian Premier, the Minister of War and the Joint Minister of Finance had supported the policy of action, Berchtold reminded the meeting that a decisive struggle against the Monarchy was being prepared by its enemies, and that Roumania was assisting the diplomacy of Russia and France. She could not be won back so long as the Great Servian agitation existed, since this encouraged the

Great Roumanian dream. The latter could only be dissipated when, by the annihilation of Serbia, Roumania felt herself alone. The difficulty of concluding an alliance with Bulgaria was that her Austrophil Ministry might at any moment be overthrown. Tisza's suggestion that "very hard conditions" should be made would probably lead to the war which all the other members of the Conference regarded as a necessity.

On July 8, the day after the Crown Council, Tisza sent a second Memorandum to the Emperor. An attack on Serbia would almost certainly involve Russia's intervention and a world war, in which Roumania would probably be a foe. Berchtold replied that the German Ambassador had just announced the expectation of Berlin that action should be taken. Germany did not believe in a Roumanian attack, and the Kaiser had written a very strong letter to the King. "From the further observations of the Ambassador," he concluded, "I could see that for us to compromise with Serbia would be construed in Germany as weakness, and would affect our position in the Triple Alliance and her future policy. These utterances of Tschirschky seem to me so important that they may perhaps influence your attitude." German solidarity was Berchtold's trump card.

While action without the support of Berlin was unthinkable, the success of the plan depended in only less degree on keeping Italy and Roumania in the dark. In neither case was military assistance expected, and the intimacy of these nominal allies with the Triple Entente rendered the keeping of secrets impossible. It seemed more useful to appeal to the peoples than to their Governments, and Austrian representatives abroad were instructed to coach the press. Mensdorff, in particular, was bidden to use his great social influence in London, and funds were promised if they could be profitably employed. Meanwhile Wiesner, of the Foreign Office, was despatched to Serajevo to collect evidence. He reported on July 13 that he found no proof of the complicity of the Belgrad Government, but official approval of Great Servian propaganda was beyond doubt. At this point Musulin, a high official of the Ballplatz, was instructed to draft an ultimatum. That the Emperor was opposed to vigorous action or that he failed to realise what was involved is a legend resting on the untrustworthy evidence of Margutti, a member of the Imperial Household. In the second week of July he remarked, with his usual brevity, *Wir können nicht mehr Zurück*.



On July 14 Berchtold informed his master of the complete agreement of the two Premiers.<sup>1</sup> The note to Belgrad would be discussed at a Ministerial Council on July 19 and presented on July 25. The Servian Government would have forty-eight hours to consider its reply. It was necessary to wait till the visit of the French President to St. Petersburg was over, since an oral discussion of the ultimatum between the ambitious Poincaré and the Tsar would increase the probability of Franco-Russian intervention. Tisza had withdrawn his objections to a short-time ultimatum when he realised the military difficulties of delay. His assent, however, was conditional on a decision to take no Servian territory apart from small frontier modifications. "The contents of the note to Belgrad agreed on to-day," concluded the report, "are such that we must reckon with the probability of war. If, nevertheless, Servia gives way and accepts our demands, it would not only be a profound humiliation for her and *pari passu* a blow to Russian prestige in the Balkans, but would secure certain guarantees for the limitation of Great Servian intrigues on our soil."

The Ministerial Council of July 19 was shorter and more harmonious than that of July 7.<sup>2</sup> Berchtold announced that the ultimatum would be presented at Belgrad on July 23, with a time limit of forty-eight hours. He declined Tisza's request for a promise that no annexations beyond frontier rectifications would be made. He agreed that no part of Servia's territory should be annexed by Austria, but she should be rendered harmless by the allocation of the largest possible slices to Bulgaria, Greece, Albania and possibly Roumania. The situation, however, might change; a Russophil Ministry, for instance, might reappear at Sofia. Thus at the end of the war it might be impossible to avoid annexations. It was accordingly agreed that at the beginning of the conflict Austria should announce to the Powers that it was not a war of conquest. This resolution did not exclude frontier rectifications for strategic purposes or the diminution of Servia in favour of other states. On the following day the ultimatum was despatched to Belgrad, and Giesl was instructed to leave if unconditional acceptance were refused. The universal opinion in Vienna, reported the Servian Minister, was that inaction would be equivalent to suicide.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> VIII, 447-8. Tisza's conversion is not yet fully explained. The editor of his correspondence attributes it to deliberate misrepresentations by Berchtold. Tisza, *Briefe*, I, 26-31.

<sup>2</sup> VIII, 511-4. <sup>3</sup> Boghitschewitsch, *Die Auswärtige Politik Serbiens*, I, 431.

Berchtold knew what he was doing, but he believed that there was no choice. The sapping and mining, he wrote to his Ambassador in Rome, could only be stopped by energetic action at Belgrad.<sup>1</sup> The object of the campaign was the dissolution of the Monarchy. In view of the untrustworthiness of Italy, the hostility of Roumanian opinion, and the Slavophil counsellors at St. Petersburg, action involved a grave responsibility. "The responsibility of doing nothing, of letting things drift till the waters close over our heads, seems to me even greater, though for the moment an easier course than to look danger in the face and shoulder the consequences." The intention was not to humiliate Servia, but to clarify her relations to the Monarchy, either by the acceptance of the conditions or, in the event of rejection, by war. The diplomatic successes of 1909 and 1913 had been useless: indeed they had made relations worse. A further peaceful triumph would be of equally little avail. "I have the feeling of being chosen by Providence to rank with the Ministers who wished to pursue a policy of peace and had to pursue a policy of war—from Cardinal Fleury to Lamsdorff—let us hope with better success than the latter." If he had felt any scruples they would have been removed by the fact that the Serbs made no attempt to grapple with the situation revealed by the Scrajevo crime.

## IX

The ultimatum presented at Belgrad by Giesl, the Austrian Minister, at 6 p.m. on July 23 began by recalling the promise of neighbourly relations made on March 31, 1909, and contrasting it with the record of the following years.<sup>2</sup> The events of June 28 had proclaimed the fatal results of tolerating criminal activities. The murder had been plotted in Belgrad; the weapons and explosives had been supplied by Serb officers and officials belonging to the *Norodna Obrana*; and the entry into Bosnia had been arranged by frontier officials. The Imperial Government must put an end to the machinations which constituted a chronic menace to the tranquillity of the Monarchy. It was therefore compelled to ask for an official condemnation of the hostile propaganda which aimed at detaching portions of Austrian territory, and the suppression of

<sup>1</sup> VIII, 564-6, July 21.

<sup>2</sup> VIII, 515-17. The critical days in Belgrad are described in Giesl, *Zwei Jahrzehnte im Nahen Orient*, ch. 12, and Loncarevich, *Jugoslaviens Entstehung* 589-623.

criminal and terrorist activities. Ten demands followed—control of publications, dissolution of the Narodna Obrana, supervision of education, dismissal of Austrophobe officers and officials, collaboration in the suppression of the movement against the territorial integrity of the Monarchy, a judicial examination of the accomplices of the Serajevo plot (in which Austrian representatives would take part), arrest of two Serbs implicated in the murders, prevention of the passage of munitions across the frontier, explanations of hostile utterances by high officials after the murders, and a speedy report on the execution of the demands. A reply was requested within forty-eight hours. There was not an accusation in it, declared Berchtold many years later, which could not be proved, nor a demand which could not be justified by the facts in Austria's possession.<sup>1</sup> Musulin, who drafted it, testifies that the Foreign Office believed that Serbia would accept, but Giesl did not.<sup>2</sup>

The reception of the ultimatum in Europe was precisely what might have been expected. Grey described it as the most formidable document ever presented to an independent state. "We may have a European war in a week", remarked King Carol. "Vous mettez le feu à l'Europe", exclaimed the angry Sazonoff. The Servian reply denied the charge of hostility to Austria, and disclaimed responsibility for the utterances of the press and private societies.<sup>3</sup> Most of the ten demands, including the dissolution of the Narodna Obrana, were accepted. The vital article on Austrian collaboration was accepted within the limits of international law, criminal procedure, and neighbourly relations. If the Austrian Government were not satisfied with the response, the Servian Government was prepared to submit the question to the decision of the Hague Court or the Great Powers. Unconditional acceptance having been refused, the Austrian Minister promptly left Belgrad on the evening of July 25. On the same day an elaborate *dossier* was despatched to the capitals of Europe setting forth the grounds for the charge of systematic hostility to Austria and of responsibility for the murders of June 28.<sup>4</sup>

Whether or not the Austro-Serb conflict would be localised depended on Russia, and to Russia Berchtold now turned.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Rings um Sazonoff*, 50.

<sup>2</sup> VIII, 660-3.

<sup>3</sup> VIII, 721-4.

<sup>4</sup> Musulin, *Das Haus am Ballplatz*, 219-30.

<sup>5</sup> VIII, 665-704.

"In resolving to deal firmly with Serbia", began the instructions to his Ambassador dated July 25, "we are of course aware of the possibility of a collision with Russia. We could not, however, allow this eventuality to divert us, since fundamental considerations of state compel us to terminate a situation in which Russian patronage renders possible the chronic menacing of the Monarchy. If Russia feels that the moment has come for the great reckoning with the Central Powers, these instructions are naturally superfluous." Perhaps, however, she was not so bellicose as her press and perchance Poincaré and Iswolsky might desire. Austria, it should be pointed out, was territorially satisfied. "If the struggle with Serbia is forced upon us, it will not be for territorial gain but simply a means of self-defence and self-preservation."

In calling attention to the *dossier* the Ambassador was instructed to remind Sazonoff that never had a Great Power borne the disruptive intrigues of a little neighbour with such patience. While Serbia had faced her old Turkish enemy, Austria had held her hand. Now that her aspirations in Turkey were realized and the subversive movement threatened the Monarchy, the situation had changed. "We must assume that conservative and dynastic Russia will understand and indeed approve our action against the menace to the tranquillity of the state." There was no thought of an attack on Orthodox Slavdom, for relations with Montenegro were excellent. Austria wished neither to obtain territory nor to infringe Servian sovereignty. She was, however, determined to enforce her demands, and she would not shrink from the possibility of European complications. "We should regret a breach of European peace all the more because we have always felt that the partitioning of the Turkish heritage and the growth of strong and independent Balkan states had removed all danger of antagonism between ourselves and Russia. We were ever ready to consider her large political interests, and we always hoped that the similar conservative, monarchical and dynastic interests of the three Empires would improve our relations. Further toleration of Servian intrigues would have undermined our existence as a state and our position as a Great Power, and thereby jeopardised the European equilibrium. . . . Our action against Serbia, whatever form it assumes, is thoroughly conservative, and its object is the preservation of our position in Europe." To the Russian Ambassador Berchtold repeatedly explained

that Austria had no quarrel with Russia.<sup>1</sup> Such arguments and declarations, however convincing they sounded at Vienna, fell flat at St. Petersburg, where Russia's historic rôle as the champion of the Balkan Slavs was the paramount consideration.

On the following day, July 26, a circular telegram was despatched announcing that Serbia had rejected Austria's demands and had thereby shown her unwillingness to cease her subversive activities.<sup>2</sup> "To our regret and greatly against our wishes we are therefore compelled to force her by the sharpest methods to a complete change of her hostile attitude." Special messages were added to each Power. Germany was thanked for her sympathetic understanding. "We confidently hope that our conflict with Serbia will not lead to complications. If it does, we gratefully recognise that Germany will remember her duties as an ally and support us in an unavoidable struggle." Italy was reminded that she had recently fought the Tripoli war, and that her gains had been willingly recognised by Austria. She was also thanked for the message, which had just arrived, that she would honour her obligations as an ally. England, with her highly developed sense of justice, could not blame Austria for deciding to defend her property with the sword, and, it was hoped, would help to localise the conflict. A similar appeal was made to France, whose attitude in the Bosnian crisis was gratefully recalled.

On July 27 Berchtold telegraphed to the European capitals his comments on the Serbian reply.<sup>3</sup> The note, he began, was saturated with insincerity. It was clear that the Serbian Government did not seriously intend to stop the intrigues against the Monarchy. There were such far-reaching reservations and limitations, both as to the foundation of the case and in regard to particular demands, that the concessions were unimportant. In particular, on a trivial pretext, the co-operation of Austrians in the investigations of the plot of June 28 was refused. The assurances regarding Austrophobe publications amounted to a refusal. The desire that the dissolved societies should not be allowed to continue their activities under another name was ignored. Since the ultimatum contained the minimum necessitated by Serbia's attitude, her answer must be regarded as unsatisfactory. That she knew it was proved by the order for mobilisation issued three hours before its presentation. She had behaved

<sup>1</sup> *Imperialismus*, V, 208-9, 262.

<sup>2</sup> VIII, 735-7.

<sup>3</sup> VIII, 774.

like a naughty child, he complained to the French Ambassador, and her dangerous pranks could be tolerated no longer.<sup>1</sup> On the same day the Foreign Minister obtained his master's assent to a declaration of war.<sup>2</sup> The Servian reply, he wrote, was very cleverly drafted—in substance perfectly worthless, but conciliatory in form. The Entente Powers might well attempt to secure a peaceful solution of the conflict unless the situation were clearly defined. A further reason was that news of firing on Austrian troops from steamers had arrived. This imaginary attack figured in the first draft of the declaration of war approved by the Emperor, but on receipt of fuller information was omitted from the document presented at Belgrad on July 28.

Berchtold vainly strove to localise the coming war by reiterating that Austria was acting in self-defence. When the British Ambassador suggested that the Servian response opened the door to agreement, he rejoined quietly but firmly that Grey did not quite understand the immense significance of Austria's problems.<sup>3</sup> It was too late to prevent hostilities, for Austrian frontier troops had been fired on and war was being declared that very day. Compromise on the basis of the note was inadmissible. These methods were only too familiar. They were not dealing with a civilised nation, and Austrian magnanimity had often been abused. Grey wished for peace, but the peace of Europe would not be preserved if Great Powers tried to save Servia from chastisement. A compromise would encourage her to continue her course, which would very soon again endanger peace. The matter must be settled directly between the two parties immediately concerned. To Italy Berchtold was prepared to offer compensation under Article 7 of the Triple Alliance (though not at Austria's expense) in the unexpected event of territory being annexed.<sup>4</sup> This concession to the Italian standpoint, he explained to his Ambassador at Rome, was made because they were engaged in a great game, which, difficult enough in any case, would be doomed to failure without the close association of the Powers of the Triple Alliance.

On July 30, after reporting Grey's desire for the mediation of the four less interested Powers and his broad hint of British intervention, Germany attempted to put on the brake. On the same day the Austrian Ambassador in Berlin reported

<sup>1</sup> D.D.F. XI, 438-9.

<sup>2</sup> VIII, 839-40 and *G. and T.* XI, 152-3

<sup>3</sup> A. VIII, 811-12.

<sup>4</sup> VIII, 846-8.

growing nervousness due to the attitude of Italy, and the desire for a generous settlement of the question of compensation. Unless the Triple Alliance held together, the chances of victory in a great struggle were diminished. These moderating counsels were counteracted by a telegram from the Austrian Military Attaché to Conrad reporting Moltke's urgent desire for immediate general mobilisation. If tremors were felt in the Wilhelmstrasse, there was no sign of weakness in the Ballplatz, even when Russia mobilised on all fronts. Berchtold had made up his mind after June 28, had counted the cost, and never looked back. "Conscious of my grave duties to my realm", telegraphed Francis Joseph to the Kaiser on July 31, "I have ordered the mobilisation of my entire forces. The operations of my army against Servia cannot be interrupted by the threatening challenge of Russia. A fresh rescue of Servia by Russian intervention would involve the most serious consequences for my territories, and therefore I cannot possibly allow it. I am aware of the significance of the decisions which I have reached, trusting in divine justice and in the assurance that your forces will stand in unflinching loyalty for my realm and the Triple Alliance."

On the same day, July 31, a final Ministerial Council was held.<sup>1</sup> When the German Ambassador had communicated the English suggestion on July 30, began the Foreign Minister, he had at once declared that hostilities against Servia must proceed. The official reply had not been drafted, but it would contain three points. Military operations would continue; the English proposal could not be discussed unless the Russian mobilisation were countermanded; the Austrian demands would have to be accepted *en bloc* and must not be discussed. In such cases the Powers always tried to water down demands. France, England and Italy would take the Russian view, and Lichnowsky was no friend of Austria. A victory of prestige would not be worth while. The mere occupation of Belgrad, even if Russia consented, would be useless. Russia would emerge as the saviour of Servia, who in two or three years would attack under much more unfavourable circumstances. Berchtold's plan of a polite refusal was approved by his colleagues, to whom the mere thought of a renewal of the Ambassadors' Conference of 1912-13 was odious. Passing to Italy he reported her opinion that the conflict was provoked by Austria; but her attitude, he

<sup>1</sup> VIII, 976-9.

explained, was determined by her desire for compensation under Article 7 of the treaty. Such a claim would only arise if Austria occupied Turkish territory, provisionally or otherwise, since according to the spirit of the treaty only Ottoman territory was in question. Italy, on the other hand, argued that the whole Balkan peninsula was concerned, and Germany agreed with her. The Italian Government declared the coming war contrary to Italian interests, since in the event of success Austrian power in the Balkans would be increased. To the demand for compensation he had replied that territorial acquisitions were not contemplated, and that it would be time to discuss it if they were made. It was decided that, if Italy fulfilled her duty as an ally, she might have Valona, in which case Austria would secure the dominant influence in North Albania. Compensation would only be made, he explained to his master, if Italy was friendly in a localised war or fulfilled her obligations in a European struggle.

That Germany declared war against Russia on August 1 while Austria waited till August 6 was due to military considerations alone. It is a legend that the stronger partner, thirsting for the fray, hustled the weaker; for the policy was made in Vienna, not in Berlin, and at the eleventh hour Bethmann endeavoured to rein in the runaway steed. Berchtold and his colleagues, in possession of the German promise of support, had gone straight ahead, resolved to perish rather than retreat. Perhaps only a timely and categorical declaration of England's intention to intervene could have held them back. It was natural that Serbia should aspire to unite under her sceptre the discontented Southern Slav subjects of her neighbour, should use their rankling grievances to foster the Pan-Serb idea, and should look to Russia for assistance as in similar circumstances Cavour had looked to France. It was equally natural that Austria, who coveted no man's territory, and who, alone of the eight Great Powers of the world, possessed no colonies, should resolve to defend herself against the openly proclaimed ambition to rob her of provinces which she had held for centuries. In taking up what he regarded as a challenge, Berchtold was speaking for his countrymen and acting as almost every other Austrian statesman would have done in his place. By common consent he had displayed unusual patience during the Balkan war, but the ultimatum of 1913 was a warning that there were limits. These limits had now been passed. "So just was the cause of Austria held to



be", reported Sir Maurice de Bunsen, the British Ambassador, "that it seemed to her people inconceivable that any country should place itself in her path, or that questions of mere policy or prestige should be regarded anywhere as superseding the necessity which had arisen to exact summary vengeance for the crime of Serajevo."<sup>1</sup>

That Serbia, flushed with victory over Turks and Bulgars and encouraged by promises of Russian support, would remain content with the frontiers of 1913 Berchtold did not believe. If a real reconciliation had ever been practicable since the change of dynasty at Belgrad in 1903, the time had passed when he was called to the helm, and for the rough handling of the Southern Slav subjects of Francis Joseph he was not responsible. The conciliatory Baernreither was a voice crying in the wilderness. Austria's intransigence after Serajevo, which surprised and shocked the world, is only intelligible in the light of her experiences and emotions since 1908. At the close of the Bosnian crisis Serbia had promised to be a good neighbour, but she had not kept her word and her intimacy with Russia was notorious. For Austria to sit with folded arms and wait till her enemies in combination felt strong enough to carry out their programme of dismemberment was to proclaim her impotence and invite attack. "If you pull up twice at the fence", observed the fiery Conrad, "the third time your horse will not jump." The carefully organised murder of the heir to the throne appeared to demand some striking vindication of the authority of the State.

The ultimatum was admittedly a gamble, for the localisation of the conflict was not seriously expected. If it failed, the realm of the Hapsburgs would disappear, and the Emperor remarked that they would be lucky if they got off with a black eye. It was envisaged as a strictly defensive action, offering the only chance of escape from a peril certain to increase. "The Serajevo crime was simply one of the latest examples of the work of destruction organised against us, of the sapping and mining which was to blow up the home in which we dwelt. . . ."<sup>2</sup> The Monarchy was faced by the alternative: A free hand for the housebreaker or the demand for security. On the rejection of the latter a fight for life was all that remained." Here is Berchtold's case stated many years later in his own words. That the war was lost and the Haps-

<sup>1</sup> *G. and T. XI*, 357.

<sup>2</sup> *Rings um Sazonoff*, 51.

burg Empire disappeared never altered his conviction that no other course was open in 1914. Better death with honour than a lingering decline! *Si fractus inlabatur orbis, impavidum ferient ruinae.*

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